

# Resisting Transculturation: The European Woman in English Travel Writing

by

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

Comprised of four separate case studies – one on the Eastern novels of Penelope Aubin and Eliza Haywood written in the 1720's, one on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, one that features female castaway narratives of the later eighteenth century, and a fourth on Isabel Burton's public mediation of her husband's writing and the transgressions of her own life – this work argues that discursive constructions of female travel were frequently challenged by women writers and female travelers themselves. Engaging with critics like Amanda Vickery, Robert Shoemaker, and Alison Conway, who wish to call our totalizing, homogenous views of the restrictions placed on women's lives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into question, this dissertation argues that despite the prevalence of works arguing against female travel because it was either too dangerous or too sexually liberating, many women conceived of themselves as not only able to travel but to do so while remaining loyal to British notions of civility and cultural purity. At the same time, the texts studied here demonstrate that, once freed from the restrictive confines of British society, English women were able to make important contributions to Britain's imperial and mercantile goals overseas that men were unable to make.

In this work I examine the ways in which domestic and sexual violence at home prompted the construction of travel as an escape to a fantasy of easy female circulation in less-restrictive public spaces where women could manage their own fates, or indeed spaces in which they were free from the seemingly constant fear of sexual assault at the hands of European men. Travel – in the case of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Isabel Burton – offered women an opportunity to transform notions of femininity into ways of making particular and unique claims to knowledge because they had access to information male travelers could not gain. Rather than descending into lust or various forms of cultural degeneration, traveling women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries opened up a space for women after them to make significant contributions to scientific and ethnographic discourse.

The work on fictional female captives and castaways in the first and third chapters of this dissertation indicates that the supposedly corrupting qualities of the “torrid zones” were ones easily fended off by English women, who were thus able to demonstrate that female interactions with so-called ‘male’ spheres of mercantile exchange, seafaring, and captivity abroad could result in greater freedom for women to travel. These texts also highlight the important contributions women could make to public life in England as a result of the knowledge gained during their periods overseas. In every chapter, this work examines the way that violence against women – and the powerlessness of women to counteract it – was a seemingly constant concern during the period

Finally, my conclusion gestures toward the possible continuities between ideas about female travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the twenty-first century. Though much more work is required, I conclude that, from the very brief research I have conducted on the subject, it appears that the inroads made by Aubin, Haywood, Montagu, Burton and others have largely been destroyed by a continual concern with the safety and sexual propriety of the Western woman overseas.

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## Dedication

To my mom, Lynda:

Every day I realize how very easy my life has been because you've been in it. Thank you for pushing me to become someone a woman like you could be proud of, and thank you for your love and friendship: they are the greatest things you've given me.

And to my dad, Jack:

You've taught me many things, not the least of which is the value of the hard work it took to get here. Thank you for being an example of what could be, and what it would take to make it happen.

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## Introduction

*In which the author explains her motivations, her terms, and her love of discursive subtitles*

In the spring of 1874, Caroline Perrett, eight-year-old daughter of a farmer in New Zealand, was kidnapped by a “roving band of Maoris” in an act of retribution against her father. Working as a contractor for the Government of New Zealand, and despite protests from the tribe, Mr. Perrett was charged with clearing land for a railway line that would pass right through a sacred Maori burial ground. Sent to bring in her family’s herd of cows at dusk, the young girl disappeared for more than fifty years. In 1929, Perrett was recognized on the streets of Whakatane by a niece who, despite the woman’s protestations that she was a Maori known as Mrs. Ngoungou, declared, “you are a white woman. What are you doing with the Maoris?” (Bentley 231). In the days and weeks that followed this revelation, much conjecture circulated about how Caroline Perrett, a European woman, could be married to a Maori man, digging gum and trading for necessities. After the discovery, Ngoungou announced that there was “too much romance being made” of her life, and criticized those who were spreading rumors that she could remember her life before the kidnapping, and should have known she was of European descent. Ngoungou – like so many captives before her – wanted to correct these myths about her behavior, and told Mr. Sheehan, reporter for a local paper, that “those who talk of my memories of my kidnapping are not speaking the truth” (231). In the presence of an old family friend, Ngoungou confessed that: “in my mind, I am Maori. I think as they think, just as I have always lived their life outwardly. All my interests and my friends are Maori, and my children also” (232). Stating that her life with the Maoris was “happy,” Ngoungou then confirmed what

must have been her family's worst fears: she would acknowledge her European roots, but she would not return to European society. She told Sheehan that:

here in Poroporo I think I shall finish my life. I have lived here so long and with age the desire to change becomes less until it finally dies out. I have been asked by many of my relatives to go and stay with them, but I cannot bring myself to leave my home and family. And then, again, I might feel out of place among the Pakehas [the Maori word for Europeans], for their ways are not my ways and it is too late to change my habits now. (232)

That Ngoungou not only knew that she was European and decided to remain with her Maori family, but also believed that she would no longer fit in with white society, highlights the ambiguous relationship all transculturated women share with their 'homeland.' In this dissertation I examine social and political engagement with the possibility of the transculturated woman in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arguing that despite the examples of women like Perrett who lived overseas and 'went native,' female authors and travelers were imagining travel not as a dangerous undertaking for women, but as one that would give them freedoms and privileges they were not allowed at home. By exploring fictional representations of female travel, along with letters, diaries and guidebooks that treat travel as their main theme, I trace the ways that interaction with the other in a foreign space was conceived of by those who entertained the possibility of a traveling eighteenth- and nineteenth-century woman. Contrary to the ideas of male 'experts' of the time – doctors, scholars, religious leaders and philosophers – who believed that travel could have negative effects on female morality, sexual purity, national identity and 'civility,' the texts examined here construct female



travel as a practice that not only granted women the ability to circulate outside of England, but the ability to do so safely and with their virtue intact when they returned home.

Ngoungou's narrative serves as a foil to the texts studied in this work. While Ngoungou claims that her life – including her very way of thinking – has been subsumed by Maori culture, the women in the texts studied here very clearly maintain their allegiances to European ways of life. Her tale provides a late representation of anxieties surrounding the figure of the traveling woman when she makes it clear that, European roots or not, Ngoungou could not “bring [herself] to leave” the family and life she knew as a Maori to resume her “proper” identity as a white woman. Ngoungou's desire to stay with her Maori family even after the truth of her European ancestry came to light echoes eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse that posited travel and life abroad as dangerous not only to Englishwomen themselves, but to the European (and especially British) ideals of racial purity and sexual morality delineated by Linda Colley, Joe Snader, Anne McClintock and others. By engaging in what Joane Nagel has called an “ethnosexual” relationship that she finds fulfilling, Ngoungou embodies long-held anxieties about the potential for the white woman traveler to ‘go native’ once she leaves the presumed safety of metropolitan England.

Trevor Bentley has written that, for white women like Ngoungou who were originally kidnapped from their homes in New Zealand, “what is startling...is the rapidity with which some white women and girls acculturated as Maori” (15). Though Bentley provides several examples of white women who transculturated and lived in ethnosexual relationships with foreign men, this work argues that women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

conceived of themselves as unable to imagine a life wherein they might come to think as ‘savages’ think.

Bentley’s work on Mrs. Ngoungou and the other women who “went native” with the Maori offers us some key insight into what was considered (and as I will argue briefly in the conclusion to this work, what is still considered) the problem of female travel overseas. Bentley notes that “images of captive white women...fuelled aggressive European retaliation and expansionism as colonial officials and military expeditions responded to public hysteria and stereotypes of potent, lustful, dark men and sexually vulnerable white women” (19). The hysteria he outlines plays a key role in discussions of white female travel throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but this dissertation argues that the “sexually vulnerable white woman” who travels to distant lands and gives up her European identity in favor of life and sexual relationships with the ‘savage’ is a construction aimed to limit the white woman’s freedom to travel. My focus, rather than being on how this captivity may have allowed women to strike back against white, male oppression in the guise of allegiance to a colonized group of people, is on the ways in which transculturation as a phenomenon was viewed by the very women who were believed to be most in danger of succumbing to it.

In this work, I examine captivity narratives by Penelope Aubin and Eliza Haywood, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters*, three female castaway narratives spanning the mid- to late-eighteenth century, including one written by a man that indicates that it was not only women who were resisting dominant discourses, and the life and writing of Isabel Burton, wife of famous explorer Richard Burton, in order to trace the way each text works first to remove the element of fear from female travel and then, secondly, to posit travel

not only as a benefit to the women themselves, but to the social and political lives of all English citizens. Beyond the potential benefits of travel for women, each text demonstrates that the female traveler – because of her sex – is able to gain a degree of knowledge that is inaccessible to men *because* of their sex. In doing so, these works – especially the female castaway texts – argue that greater female circulation, including access to knowledge normally restricted to women of the lower classes, is of potential benefit not only to women, but to all of England as well.

In four separate case studies – two involving works of fiction written by or primarily about women and focusing on travel, and two by female travelers themselves – this work argues that there is a gap between what many felt were the unacceptable dangers women faced while traveling overseas, the actual travel experiences of women like Montagu and Burton, and the way authors at home imagined the world of female travel. In addition to this examination, I argue that when sexual violence against women occurs in these works, it is predominantly at the hands of the supposedly civilized white, European man. These texts focus on the dangers of female confinement at home, and almost always spare the heroine from attacks at the hands of the so-called ‘heathens’ and the wild man of Enlightenment philosophy discussed by Maximillian Novak, Hayden White and others.

The subjects of these four chapters vary in genre, period and authorship, but they provide a valuable cross section that draws attention to the ways that women themselves – rather than the men who regularly spoke for them – conceived of the nature of femininity, female agency, and transgression in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite the dominant conception of travel as being inappropriate for women on the grounds that it led to all sorts of possible contacts with ‘others’ (sailors, pirates, ‘savages’ etc.), that could be a threat to

feminine purity, bodily integrity, and the integrity of English 'bloodlines,' each of the texts studied here constructs travel as not only an appropriate activity for women, but one that ultimately benefits, instead of endangers, English colonial or mercantile projects overseas. Though women were often discouraged from engaging directly in conversations about political and social affairs, I argue that the authors discussed here use fictional texts, along with letters, diaries, and autobiographies, as a way to enter into public discussions about appropriate female behavior in an appropriately feminine way. By using these 'feminine' forms of writing (novels, letters, behavior manuals, etc.) the authors of the texts studied here not only argue for the safety of female travel but also for its ability to grant women the knowledge they require to engage in public discourse.

This work joins the ongoing project started by Amanada Vickery, Sara Mills, Robert Shoemaker, Alison Conway and others of reimagining the lives of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women as ones that engaged with, but did not always abide by, pronouncements about female propriety and conduct. This dissertation calls for a reconsideration of the historical and literary constructions of femininity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My conclusion calls for a reconsideration of the way female travel is constructed in the twenty-first century.

Because the texts studied here vary in genre and literary period, some key features and themes that tie these works together need to be discussed. Beginning with a review of the critical history of travel and travel writing in general, I position female travel writing within this tradition, then move on to a discussion of the particular objections eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers had to female travel. In this section, I will outline the key terms used in this

work, and offer some of the important geographical and historical information that necessarily informs this project.

It is also necessary to draw the reader's attention to the way violence – both in its physical form (sexual assaults, in this case) and its rhetorical use in the form of attacks on Montagu and Burton in the press – work in this discussion. As I note throughout this project, women represented in parts of this dissertation face more violence at home than they do when they travel.

### Travel and the Western Woman

As Maria Frawley, Barbara Korte, Sara Mills, and Kristi Siegel have argued, the practice of female travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was fraught with difficulty. Siegel notes that, “given that travel – and particularly unescorted travel – was deemed inappropriate for a lady,” women were forced to proceed with caution when it came to writing and publishing their own travel narratives. According to Siegel, “early women travelers had a lot at stake; they needed to establish some narrative credibility while, at the same time, countering attacks against their femininity prompted by their so-called unnatural and inappropriate behavior” (3).

Despite the truthfulness of assertions about the safety of travel for women, and what Mills refers to as the “problematic status” of the female travel writer “caught between the conflicting demands of the discourse of femininity and that of imperialism” (22), this dissertation argues that some women, like Montagu and Burton, cared little about accusations of impropriety. It is also clear that, for women who remained at home and chose to write travel narratives, Mills's claim for the problematic status of travel writing did not seem to register as strongly as the need to imagine appropriate female travel.

The popularity of these narratives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggests the need for a careful examination of the ways in which women conceived of themselves and each other as travelers, in contrast to the claims of men who spoke publicly about the subject. According to Mary Louise Pratt, “travel books were very popular. They created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure and even moral fervor about European expansion” (3). For women, these narratives could be a source of great adventure in the face of their access to actual adventure being restricted to some degree. That men and women were, in the scientific rhetoric of the time, “fundamentally and biologically different,” with these differences believed to be “grounded in nature by virtue of the dictates of their bodies” (Seigel *Woman Travelers* 63), led to women being considered unfit for travel because of their biologically determined weakness, susceptibility to lustful impulses, and “inherently diseased body” (62). Frawley documents how MP George Curzon declared in a letter to *The Times* that women’s “sex and training render them equally unfitted for exploration” and declared that the “genus of the professional female globe-trotter is one of the horrors” of the nineteenth century (111). A few days later, Frawley notes, *Punch* published a response to Curzon that declared, “let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts, but they musn’t, can’t, and shan’t be geographic!” (111). The traveling woman, for most of her male contemporaries, represented, in Frawley’s terms, a “sexual anomaly”: a woman who gloried in displaying her ‘manly’ traits.

This work argues against ideas that women turned more ‘manly’ when they traveled and insists rather that those traits defined along sexual lines by critics like Frawley and Rebecca Weaver-Hightower are more clearly defined as traits attributed to women of the lower classes who were not normally the protagonists of these texts. Drawing on the work of Vickery,

Shoemaker, and others, I argue that much of the discourse that rendered travel unsafe for women, and considered the women's role to be at home (including the late Victorian concept of the "angel in the house"), can be complicated by examining the ways in which women were representing travel, and in the case of Montagu and Burton, actually traveling, despite those prohibitions. Instead, as I argue more specifically in chapter three, the relative ease with which women of the lower-classes circulated and engaged in some public life (running shops, working in markets, etc.), granted them access to skills and knowledge required by all women to live abroad successfully. The 'transgressions' of the female traveler are those that, instead of being aligned with masculinity, align her with the freedoms allowed to women of the lower class. The skills possessed by women who were forced to work outside the home are ones that become indispensable for female survival overseas, and prompt a rewriting of rules about female circulation in public. Hence, this chapter, and the work more generally, turns away from a division between "male" roles and characteristics and "female" roles and characteristics to evaluate the ways in which the English class system serves not to protect the upper-middle-class woman from the horrors of travel, but rather limits her options for survival if she finds herself in the foreign space.

That travel opened up a whole new world for women forms one of the thematic bases of this thesis, but my argument revolves around the ways in which both the fictional and non-fictional texts studied here operate in such a way as to make travel acceptable and safe for women. This move offers a new conception of femininity that moved beyond the limits of the private sphere normally accorded to 'polite' women. In the face of the large number of hazards women were thought to face during travel, the women studied in these texts manage to

overcome these challenges and highlight the value of female interaction in both the colonial and mercantile spheres.

### Going Native, Transculturation, and Ethnosexual Sex

Perhaps one of the most startling descriptions of the lives of English women overseas comes from Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone During the Years 1791-1793*. Falconbridge's narrative joins works by doctors, scientists, and philosophers that imagined the hazards of life outside the metropole for women. Though her narrative comes later than the texts studied in the first two chapters of this dissertation, her statements encapsulate the fear of transculturation – and its imagined results – especially clearly. Writing about the colony of free blacks in Sierra Leone that her husband, Alexander, was sent to manage, Falconbridge tells us that “among the outcasts were seven of our countrywomen, decrepit with disease, and so disguised with filth and dirt, that I should never have supposed they were born white” (64). Their dirtiness and their disease marks these women as somehow contaminated by the land in which they live, and Falconbridge notes that the women are “almost naked from head to foot” (64).<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to keep her reader from feeling empathy for the women, and to mark their ‘degeneration’ as a process in which the women willingly engaged, she notes that “they seemed insensible to shame, or to the wretchedness of their situation themselves; I begged they would get washed” (65). Though she first assumes that these women are convicts, she quickly finds out that the women had been “intoxicated with liquor, then inveigled on board of ship, and married to *Black men*, whom they

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<sup>1</sup> Roxann Wheeler (1999) has noted that nakedness was an “especially important visual constituent” of the difference between those who were ‘civilized’ and those who were not. She notes: “nudity, or most usually partial covering signified at once a less civilized and more impoverished society, a non-Christian (Adam and Eve had learned to hide their ‘shame’ by clothing) and, occasionally, a freer sexuality” (*Africa* 22).



had never seen before” (65 italics in original text). Though the women can hardly be at fault for being drugged and kidnapped, Falconbridge’s assertion that they are “insensible to shame” suggests how far she feels they have been transculturated. Every sensible Englishwoman, she argues, would hide her nudity. As Celia Daileader has argued, “copulative images” involving a black man and a white woman “highlight the idea that inter-racial sex creates a new creature – and not only in the future progeny, but at the very moment of sexual union” (23). What Falconbridge offers us is a picture of the ‘new creature’ created when a British woman has an ethnosexual union with a dark-skinned man, and she assumes that, like her, her audience will respond with disgust.

Concomitant to Falconbridge’s notion that the women she sees in Sierra Leone are “insensible to shame” is the notion that English men and women were prone to degeneration if they spent too much time away from England and were subjected to various climatological influences. Weaver-Hightower explains that:

tropical climates were thought to be dangerous to the mental health and intellect of colonizers. Medical experts considered the landscape itself to be threatening to Europeans because of the heat and intensity of its sun, which was thought to cause lethargy, sickness, and even mental and racial degeneration. These climactic symptoms were thought to explain both the ‘natural’ regressiveness of indigenous people and the dangers to the not-sufficiently disciplined colonizers. (138)

For much of the period studied here, British culture operated on “expanded concepts of civility – taste, refinement, discernment, generosity of spirit – [that] were heralded as the essence of a superior English culture” (Wilson *Island Race* 144). The dangers of degeneration were

frequently discussed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works of literature, philosophy and medicine, and Falconbridge's narrative includes these women as a sign of the effect that life in hot climates, combined with sexual relationships with 'savages,' could have on English women. The diseases the women suffer from not only raise the specter of sexually transmitted infections, such as that which they may have contracted either in London or during their 'marriages' to black men, but are also one characteristic of the dangers of island life. Tropical diseases to which they had no natural immunity could wreak havoc on British colonists.

Although Daileader's study of what she terms "Othellophilia" focuses mainly on Shakespeare's early modern dramas, it nevertheless offers us some insight into the way that interracial sex was conceived of outside of England as travel became more popular. Writing about Desdemona's murder in Shakespeare's *Othello* and Cleopatra's suicide in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Daileader notes that "Othellophile narratives are less concerned with the praise or blame of their black male protagonists than with the sexual surveillance and punishment of the white women who love them" (10). Arguing that white women face the brunt of the consequences for interracial romance, Daileader goes on to suggest that "Othellophilia as a cultural construct is first and foremost *about women* – white women explicitly as the subjects of representation" (10). Her contention that the "fear of female sexual autonomy regularly shades into fear of miscegenation and vice versa" (46) is one with which the authors and travelers examined here, and their critics, continually engage.

The works that I study here clearly show that racial alterity plays a significant role in how female travel was viewed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though ideas of racial difference changed during the course of the period under study, according to Roxann

Wheeler, the possibility of cultural degeneration—including the idea that a middle-class woman could be contaminated by associations with the lower classes—was one with which many Britons were concerned.<sup>2</sup> Hayden White has argued that English culture defined itself on the basis of a negative image of a wild man who existed outside the boundaries of civilization. White argues that “if we do not know what we think ‘civilization’ *is*, we can always find an example of what it is not” (5). For those who worried about the fate of the female traveler, the ultimate anxiety about female safety during travel came from the threat that this wild man—a being “from whom no blessings flow because God has withdrawn the blessing from him” (13)—posed to her. That, under the influence of this shadowy and ill-defined figure, a woman could descend to a “state of degeneracy below that of ‘nature’ itself, a peculiarly horrible state in which the possibility of redemption is completely precluded” (13) is a myth that the women in this study actively battle against. Earl Miner has documented the ways in which the wild man became a target for anxieties about non-normative sexual behavior to the extent that the foreign man, and the English woman who was interacting with him, became a repository of sexual anxieties. Miner writes “certain images constantly recur in the naturalistic description of savages, whether abroad or at home: dirt and darkness, bestial appearance [and] sexuality” (89). For eighteenth-century thinkers and writers, the wild man represented “the savagery into which civilization is always in danger of lapsing” (90). Fears that the traveling woman, especially the unprotected woman traveling alone, would fall into the hands of, or in

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<sup>2</sup> Wheeler writes that “throughout the eighteenth century older conceptions of Christianity, civility, and rank were *more explicitly* important to Britons assessment of themselves and other people than physical attributes such as skin color, shape of the nose or texture of the hair. Embodied in dress, manners and language, the concepts of Christianity, civility, and rank were not simply abstract categories of difference; they constituted visible distinctions that are difficult for us to recover today” (7) but that by the end of the eighteenth century, “many Britons appeared to believe that human differences were less superficial, less changeable, and more a reflection of interiority than before. Race seemed more fixed and, some suspected, unalterable by changing climate, intensified commerce, or by education than at the beginning of the century” (31-2).

love with, the “savage” or wild man became part and parcel of proscriptions against female travel.

### Rape and Exchange

A full analysis of women in English travel writing and travel literature requires a careful study of the reasons why women in these texts take to travel in the first place. In chapters one and three, on female captives and castaway narratives respectively, the heroines find themselves on the high seas, isolated on islands, or in the harems of Turkish sultans because they have either been the targets of sexual violence at the hands of European men or because, in a system that depicts women as helpless and in need of male protection, their male protectors have failed them. G. Durston has published a study on rape in the eighteenth century that documents the ways in which women became easy targets for sexual violence. He writes that:

‘seduction’, particularly of the ‘innocent’, was an eighteenth-century preoccupation. Heavy-handed ‘flirtation’ and pressure, especially where there were inequalities of power, was normal, blurring the dividing line between consent and force, so that Jonathan Swift could talk of female agreement obtained ‘half by force and half by consent.’ (II 23)

That women were targets of sexual violence in England highlights an intriguing yet frequently ignored aspect of critical discussions of travel literature. Where foreign, generally darker-complexioned men, including those from the Ottoman empire, Africa, and the ‘native’ inhabitants of tropical islands and North America, were posited as lustful heathens seeking every chance to have sex with innocent white women abroad, it is, in all of the fictional works

discussed here, the European, white, supposedly highly-civilized man who embodies the greatest threat of sexual violence against the solitary woman.

In those travel accounts where there is no threat of sexual violence, let alone actual rape (for example, in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* and Isabel Burton's negotiation of her image for British women), we still find the traits of patriarchal violence of a different kind: Montagu ran away with Wortley the evening before her father was due to force her into a marriage to a man she loathed, and Burton, as a teenager, lamented that her fate (before she met Richard) was to be confined to a house in the country, living a stagnant and meaningless existence. Montagu's journey to Turkey took her into the houses of Eastern intellectuals and educated Turkish women and gave her the same chances that Burton's marriage to Richard would offer her 150 years later: the chance to escape from being forced into marriages they did not wish to undertake.

The chapters in this dissertation follow chronological order as closely as possible. Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, because they were in process continually from the time of composition between 1716-1718 to the time of publication in 1763, are both a product of the early-eighteenth century when Montagu traveled, and the mid-eighteenth century when the letters were published after her death. They appear in this work in chapter two, accounting for their 1763 publication date, but it is important to keep in mind that some letters, including her letter about inoculation, were being circulated in her social circle long before they were gathered together and published for a wider audience. This is a well-known example of the public nature of even private letters, and the way in which letters like Montagu's could allow aristocratic women access to the world of medicine and politics.

The first chapter considers the early eighteenth-century Eastern captivity novels of Penelope Aubin and Eliza Haywood and argues that these two authors both offer a model of the female traveler who controls her own fate and the fate of others, and of female authorship that intervenes openly in debates about travel and agency more generally. Engaging with scenes of sexual violence at the hands of European men long before they are victimized – if they are victimized at all – by the supposedly licentious Turkish sultan, these texts offer up an image of female agency that must necessarily take over where masculine protection fails. I extend this analysis to the narrative structures of the texts themselves to argue that Aubin and Haywood use the Eastern narrative itself to align their works with the oral tales of Scheherazade, heroine of *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. By using the same inset narrative structure and Eastern elements, Aubin and Haywood themselves become the heroines of a narrative that posits greater freedom and social participation for women and pushes for social reforms surrounding conceptions of femininity and feminine weakness.

My second chapter treats Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* as a set of documents that come to embody concerns about the traveling woman and the life she could have in the East. While other scholars have argued that Montagu's travel in Turkey results in an experience of transculturation, I propose, instead, that Montagu remains loyal not only to her English heritage but also to her duties as ambassadress throughout the *Letters*. It was Montagu's hostile contemporaries, instead, who used her entrance into an Ottoman harem as a way to attack her not for sexual rapacity, but rather for her very public, and hence transgressive, support of inoculation against smallpox, a practice she had performed on her son while in Turkey. The public nature of Montagu's engagement with the smallpox inoculation debate,

combined with England's complicated relationship with the East, are played out in such a way that Montagu's scientific discoveries are downplayed and she becomes a figure of transculturation even though she does not perform any customary 'transcultural' acts (such as taking a Turkish lover, adopting Turkish habits, and so forth). Instead, her detractors emphasize the place she discovered the practice, who performed it, and how the assumption of the Eastern practice in England signals that Montagu believed that England might benefit from transforming itself into a harem-based culture. Though Montagu supported some harem customs, including the wide-spread female influence in the government and in the world of political influence experienced by harem women, it is clear from a reading of her *Letters* that she favored English life over Turkish customs. Through her unique engagement with Turkish women and their traditions, Montagu is able to gather knowledge and information that becomes integral to English society in the eighteenth century, and her support for harem traditions of female public influence suggests ways in which she supported greater freedom in public roles for women at home. This support translates, for Montagu's family and critics, as a serious social transgression.

Engaging with the lore surrounding the publication of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719, my third chapter argues that the female castaway is uniquely capable of negotiating life on distant islands. By analyzing three female castaway novels of the later eighteenth century – the purported autobiography of Unca Eliza Winkfield, titled *The Female American* (1767), Charles Didbin's *Hannah Hewitt, or the Female Crusoe* (1789) and Marguerite D'Aubenton's *Zelia in the Desert* (1798) – this chapter argues that it is the female castaway figure who is able to survive the challenges of island life and establish a new colonial outpost, even in the face of

fears that she could become a victim of rape, violence, madness, or the degenerative powers of the heat. Instead, these female castaway figures are the ones who establish productive and peaceful island lives before men arrive, thus carving out a space for female engagement in the colonial sphere without the need for male help or protection.

My final chapter analyses the role that Isabel Burton plays in mediating life in the East for her contemporaries. She attempts to construct travel not only as a safe, but completely appropriate, venture for the Victorian wife. By mediating not only her own, but also her husband's relationship with the British public, Burton seeks to sanitize the transgressive possibilities that life in the East can offer a woman in order to open a space for those who come after her to travel without fear of, or fear of being accused of, transculturation. In order to do so, however, she must sanitize not only her own transgressions, but negate the ones committed by women who had come before her, especially Lady Hester Stanhope and Lady Jane Digby. By positing her own life and moral stance as the appropriate approach to life in the East, Burton not only suggests that Stanhope and Digby were atypical women, but that she and her husband Richard *were* a typical Victorian couple in a typical Victorian marriage.

Each of the women discussed in this study offers something to the women who come after her. Fictional heroines imagine captivity and life abroad as one in which female agency and fantasy combine to create a world where women are the key to success not only in mercantile adventures but in establishing and maintaining marriages of equality and mutual respect. Montagu and Burton trace actual paths for reasonably well-off women to follow: Montagu by risking her reputation to experience the deepest, most secretive aspects of Turkish life in order to bring smallpox inoculation to England, and Burton by using the restrictive



domestic ideology that shapes the Victorian period in our imagination to posit travel for women as not only possible, but easily manageable for the ‘ordinary’ Victorian wife. In each case, female travel is reframed as not only a distinct possibility for women, but also as a necessary element in gaining knowledge that English society needs to understand the world around them. My conclusion expands this line of research into a brief analysis of the ways in which Western female travel and interaction with the foreign space is posited today. The end of this work, then, pushes the reader to look forward from the eighteenth century, and acknowledge how little progress – despite the efforts of women like the ones studied here – we have made in altering ideas about female travel and sexuality.

#### A Note on Terminology:

I follow Mary Louise Pratt’s use of the term ‘transculturation’ in the sense that it describes the transmission of “materials” from one culture to another (7). In the case of this work, however, rather than materials being transmitted from dominant groups to “subordinated or marginal groups” in Pratt’s usage, my focus is on how the dominant or normative group (Western, generally English, women) adopt (or rather, do not adopt) materials transmitted to them from the marginal culture. Transculturation is less a term of the “contact zone” in its colonial sense here, and more a term that demonstrates a blurring of the boundaries between Western values, clothing, habits, and the like and those purportedly belonging to the ‘other’ culture. As I note in chapter one, it would be a mistake to refer to the Ottoman empire as a “contact zone” in the sense that Pratt uses this term. The term ‘transculturation’ appears most frequently here in the context of discussions of the ways in

which women adopt – or do not adopt – qualities purported to be part of Eastern, ‘native’ or ‘savage’ societies.

Joane Nagel’s employment of the term ‘ethnosexual’ has been of some use as well to describe a sexual relationship in which partners are of differing ethnicities, and in this case, specifically relationships between white women and Eastern men. I use these terms in the absence of others, fully accepting that ethnicity is as much a social construction as gender, race or class. I follow Katherine Kittridge who, through Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, uses Barbara Babcock’s definition of “transgressive” as: “any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms, be they linguistic, literary, artistic, religious, social or political” (16).

I tend to use the terms “Barbary,” “Ottoman empire,” and “Arab” (as in “Arab countries”) interchangeably, though historically speaking there is some difference between these groups. As Donald Quartaret, Stephen Clissold and Ann Thomson have explained, the area of the world known as the Ottoman empire during the time these texts were written encompassed a number of different ethnic groups who, for generations, had intermarried with each other and who were known in the West broadly as “Turks.” Because these groups were all addressed under this moniker in the texts studied in this dissertation, it is difficult to determine the ethnic backgrounds of each individual “Turk,” and I generally regard them, when there is no clear difference, as interchangeable for the purposes of clarity. Generally speaking, they practiced the Islamic faith, and lived in two related yet politically separate areas: the Ottoman empire, which encompasses modern-day Turkey, Egypt and parts of Iraq, Hungary, Greece and Romania, and

the Barbary states, three regencies nominally under Turkish jurisdiction but with independent governments: Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers. Most often, it was Barbary corsairs who captured and then sold slaves in the markets of the Ottoman empire.

Finally, though these texts often feature women from European countries, English authors, with the exception of *Zelia in the Desert* by French author Marguerite D'Aubenton, have authored them. Because of this, I often use the term "English" or "European" interchangeably to refer to heroines who represent what we would now call "Western" values or sensibilities.

#### A Note on the Text:

When available, I have used texts in print, rather than electronic versions, for ease of pagination, and have only corrected spelling and punctuation when clarity required. These changes have been highlighted with square brackets, and eighteenth-century spellings have not generally been corrected. In a move that would sadden any supporter of the Queen's English, spelling variations have been altered to fit American deviations. In a word, not even the Queen can outlast the angry, red, spell-check line.

The discursive subtitles that exist at the beginning of each chapter serve as a nod to the brilliant subtitling practices of the eighteenth-century novel and are intended to grant a touch of levity and clarity to the reader's experience with this work.

## Chapter 1: Women in Eastern Captivity: Re-thinking Fiction

*In which we find our heroines assaulted, transported and held captive only to discover that they orchestrate their own escapes, and the rescue of their male counterparts.*

As Britain's naval power began to expand during Cromwell's rule, and the British government began commissioning trade missions overseas, the reality of Barbary piracy – and slavery – captured the English imagination. Although there exists a collection of captivity narratives written by men who somehow escaped the galleys and published versions of their stories, there is little surviving literature produced by women. Instead, British authors – many of them female – used the burgeoning novel form to imagine the fate of women who were taken into slavery in the Ottoman empire and the Barbary states. Both Penelope Aubin and Eliza Haywood, whose novels of the 1720s are the focus of this chapter, hypothesized what Ottoman captivity might be like for women. Focusing on four titles by Aubin – *The Adventures of Count de Vinevil and His Family* and *Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda* published in 1721, *The Noble Slaves* published in 1722, and *Charlotta du Pont*, from 1723 – along with Haywood's 1727 works *The Fruitless Enquiry* and *Philidore and Placentia* – I argue that, within the convoluted, mixed-up, and often implausible plots that form these works, Aubin and Haywood use a complex rendering of the problems of female captivity to critique the ways in which women were exchanged as goods at home, but also to expose the ways in which life abroad – despite proscriptions against female travel – was often safer for women than life at home. This chapter also addresses the way in which the heroines of these works find themselves traveling in the first place: because they have been driven to it or forced into it by European men.

Amid the growing reports emerging in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries about Englishmen being held captive in the East, these fictional female captivity narratives portray the English woman as the most well-equipped of all Britons to survive captivity at the hands of the so-called 'barbarians,' and to emerge with greater insight into the mysteries of the Ottoman empire. Though both Aubin's and Haywood's heroines are often European rather than English, in writing for English women (and an English audience in general), these authors instill English values and notions of civility in their texts through the adventures of their nominally 'European' women travelers. Time and time again, these texts feature situations wherein the female heroine confronts and manages the threats to her virtue and her personal safety without the help of her male counterpart. In fact, in these texts, the heroine's male relatives – fathers, brothers, lovers – frequently fail to protect and guard the honor and virtue of their female charges. This failure, rather than resulting in a disastrous fate such as the one that befalls Richardson's *Clarissa* later in the century, grants Aubin's and Haywood's heroines the space they need to have agency over their own existence, and prove themselves able to guard their own virtue, even in the most supposedly threatening of circumstances.

Rather than being suspected because of the time she spends 'unsupervised' in the Ottoman empire, the English-styled heroine is redeemed not only because she brings about her own rescue, but also because she becomes the rescuer of her love interest. In doing this, Aubin's and Haywood's heroines gain control over their fates not only overseas but also at home: it is through their active intervention that marriages are made or restored. Furthermore, by creating heroines who defy the limits of supposedly 'natural' femininity and demonstrate their

competence in the 'masculine' worlds of trade and travel, Aubin and Haywood draw attention to their own abilities to alter the ideologies of the patriarchal world. By taking up a narrative critique of the position of women in society and in marriage and their value to society in Britain, Aubin and Haywood align themselves with the persona and aims of Scheherazade, narrator and heroine of Antoine Galland's 1704-1710 *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. By following the same kind of narrative pathways that Scheherazade traces, Aubin and Haywood make their own attempts to reform their male readers by demonstrating the ways in which the construction of a rigid ideology of femininity restricts the potential of women to contribute to, and positively influence, British society.

#### The Captivity Narrative: Critical Debates

As captivity narratives, Aubin's and Haywood's novels of the 1720's have received very little critical examination, a surprising fact given a recent upsurge in critical interest in captivity as a narrative tool. Captivity texts have been traditionally seen as an American genre, and the scholarly work that exists by Gary Ebersole, Christopher Castiglia, and Michelle Burnham focuses almost exclusively on the history and representation of American captives and their usually Native American captors, and discusses how experiences of captivity shaped the ways that American colonists constructed ideas of savagery and 'the savage' for generations. Gary Ebersole's argument that the captivity narrative emphasizes the ways in which captivity draws attention to the body of the captive is important in a study of British captivity narratives. He writes:

in many cultures (and certainly in the West) human existence and personal identity are fundamentally defined by the boundary marked by the surfaces of the

body. Yet even in waking consciousness, we are often not fully aware of our bodies. In captivity, however, the human body is brutally brought to the attention of the captive as both the fragile container of life, and in the form of a corpse, as a cold, empty marker of death. In captivity (as in war) one's body is experienced in more fundamental ways than previously. In extremis, one becomes acutely aware of the body as the site of pleasure and of pain, of refreshment and exhaustion. (7)

That the body – rather than the mind – becomes the focus of attention in captivity narratives illustrates the ways in which the experience of captivity had the potential to alter the captive's body in physically identifiable ways. Captivity was traumatic not only for the captive's inner self, but for his or her body as well, and British captives in the Ottoman empire often returned (if they returned at all) to their home communities marked with the physical trauma they had endured (scars, bruises, pregnancy, circumcision, castration). These physical markers made it much more difficult for the captive to re-assimilate to their 'normal' lives, because the markers of difference were easily identifiable by others. In many cases, it may have been easier for the captive to simply remain in captivity than return home.

Christopher Castiglia's work argues that captivity narratives were popular among women because they featured captivity situations that were comparable, at least in the abstract, to those women faced at home (3). The texts studied here indeed reflect this comparison by frequently casting unwanted marriages, along with other forms of captivity and victimization European women faced at home, in an unfavorable light when compared to Ottoman captivity. Michelle Burnham argues that captivity texts that featured female heroines encouraged female readers to adopt a sympathetic (and thus accepting) view of the returned captive woman (iv).

The texts by Aubin and Haywood studied here, however, do not “provoke their readers to cry for captive heroines” but rather posit captivity as a fantasy of female agency that enables the captive woman to interact more freely with ‘male’ spheres at home.

Two seminal studies that *do* focus on British captivity narratives are Joe Snader’s *Caught Between Worlds* and Linda Colley’s *Captives*. Snader’s work focuses on the “fundamental variety of the previously established British tradition” and highlights the differences between Puritan and English captivity narratives: “while Puritan writers wax passionate over the fate of God’s people, British captivity writers celebrate the virtues of English liberties with a heightened patriotic fervor” (51). British texts of the eighteenth century also focus less on the specific racial or ethnic category of the captor involved, and instead offer a “broader context of multiple and ambiguous relationships among British captives and their foreign captors” (62).

Snader’s argument informs a great deal of the analysis in this chapter, and his text offers one of the earliest and most complete studies of British captivity narratives, including those featuring Ottoman captivity. He suggests that captivity narratives worked to “define non-Western peoples as by nature given to despotism and slavery, while the captive’s struggle to escape often defined an inborn liberty within the British people” (5).<sup>3</sup> These narratives play a crucial role in allowing the reader to explore, and then summarily reject, “the possibility that captives or other European travelers might abandon civility and redefine themselves within the terms of alien cultures” (5). Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines—including those who seem at first glance to have ‘redefined themselves within the terms’ of an alien culture—ultimately

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<sup>3</sup> This liberty, of course, varied depending on the class and gender of the specific British person in question.



reject transculturation as a possibility, allowing Aubin and Haywood to offer a nuanced critique of their own culture in relation to that of the Ottoman Turk. These texts highlight moments when it appears that Turkish life might offer the female captive glimpses into a world that she could envy. Snader's work also encourages a rethinking of the importance of the self and other binary, a necessary task considering that this binary is rarely emphasized in the works of Aubin and Haywood. Instead, this binary is made ambiguous in the relationship between East and West that both authors present (94).

Colley's work, perhaps the best study of Britons in captivity, offers some perspective on the role that captives, captivity, and captivity narratives played in the formation of the 'British' nation. Colley's historical approach helps to quantify the British captivity experience in a way that Snader's text does not, and she documents the "very large numbers of real-life Crusoes and Gullivers seized in regions outside Europe after 1600" (11) and that many of these were held captive in the Ottoman empire. Like Snader, she encourages readers to understand that Britain's relationship with the Ottoman empire was different from its relationship to its colonies in North America, the West Indies, and later, India. The British were profitably engaged in trading and mercantile exchanges with the East which required largely cordial relationships with traders, rather than the kinds of hostile interactions which were happening in North America. As Colley suggests, this required the English to form a more nuanced idea of Ottomans than they had of 'savages' in their colonies overseas, and they were required to attempt to tolerate Ottoman differences (15). Ann Thomson writes that no matter what hostility might be felt toward the Turks, Europeans "maintained diplomatic relations and

signed treaties” with Ottoman sultans, and from time to time even paid tributes to them (2).

## Us and Them

If we take Colley’s estimate that in the last decade of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth, “some 12,000 English subjects” (44) might have been captured by Barbary pirates, it comes as no surprise that the issue of captivity came to be discussed extensively as a conflict between the civility and morality of the West and the tyrannical, licentious customs of the East, and between the Christianity of the West and the Islam of the East.

Bernard Lewis, in *Islam and the West*, notes that Paul Rycaut, one of the first to document the religion and customs of the Turkish people in his 1665 *History of the Turks*, “is at the origin of the later vision of Turkey as the land of what came to be called Oriental despotism, to which, he believed, the Turks were naturally inclined” (74). Indeed, Rycaut’s writing seems to have begun the spate of stereotypical traits that came to be associated with the Turk or Barbarian: rampant sexuality, opulent palaces and harems full of lusty women guarded by eunuchs who were, by definition, victims of oriental (Islamic) tyranny. Lewis even goes so far as to suggest that, as Rycaut imagined them, “Turks were reported by various travelers to engage regularly in bestiality – with female fish, according to one narrator – and to be massively addicted to sodomy” (77). Despite the ways in which the Turks were vilified by the English, a relationship between the two was necessary for British trade, and was ultimately important enough that Nabil Matar has suggested that “Renaissance Britons were far more likely to meet or have met a Muslim or a Jew than an Indian” (*Britain and Barbary* 3) on the streets of London or in coastal towns. Matar also suggests that “the Turks and Moors were men and

women they [Britons] had known, not in fantasy and fiction, but with whom they worked and lived, sometimes hating them yet sometimes accepting or admiring them” (6). He even suggests that unlike relationships with sub-Saharan Africans, built on domination and slavery, Britons’ relationship with the Turkish people was one of “anxious equality and emulation” (8).

#### Britons Never Will be Slaves?

Matar’s analysis of the nuances of the relationship between Britons and Ottomans helps to highlight both the tensions and the contradictions in the relationship as it existed in the British imagination. He writes that in the period between 1588 and when Cromwell undertook to expand the navy in the 1650’s:

Britons were fearful of the Moors. Unlike the colonial making of the English identity in Ireland and New England, the encounter with the Moors of Islam was precarious and dangerous: this was the encounter where the Other prevailed and where English captives and slaves, along with their wives, children, parish neighbors, merchants who went bankrupt, and ransomers who were outmaneuvered, tricked or ignored had to rethink what it meant to be English or British. Every time Britons sailed the Mediterranean or ventured out across the Atlantic or spotted a Turkish or Algerian man-of-war off their coasts, they learned how the course of domestic economy and foreign policy was challenged and even changed by the power of Barbary rulers and the large numbers of their own compatriots, grinding at the mills of slavery. (8)

On its way to becoming the most powerful imperial nation in the nineteenth century, Britain had to face the fact that Barbary piracy was a problem it simply could not solve. My argument

draws on the seeming impossibility of managing the threat of Barbary piracy by positing that one of the solutions to dealing with the Ottoman empire lay in the ability of the female traveler to navigate Turkish culture and interact with Ottoman households in ways that male travelers simply could not.

Colley, Snader, Claire Norton, and Gordon Sayre have likewise argued that the pervasive existence of Barbary corsairs and other Turkish pirates caused serious anxiety to Britons involved in trade or even who merely lived by the seaside. Colley writes that the “early modern Mediterranean was above all a region where the different states of Western Christendom confronted and sometimes cooperated with the Ottoman empire and with Islam” (*Captives* 35). She goes on to describe the “complex and protracted engagement between the Mediterranean ambitions of the Western powers and the forces of the Crescent” that “lay at the heart of both the failure of colonial Tangier, and of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain’s most significant captivity fears” (35). Much was at stake for those who chose, or were forced, to interact with the Ottoman empire.

### Captivity

The threat of captivity – even without knowledge of actual instances of it – caused Britons to fear that their ideals of freedom and civility may not have been the divinely-inspired creation they understood them to be. Colley suggests that “Barbary corsairing also affronted British Christianity and Protestantism” because those held captive in North Africa “were believed to be at risk of forcible conversion to Islam or, still worse, of opting voluntarily for that faith if exposed to its influence long enough” (47). Those that became victims of forcible conversion were often viewed – when and if they returned to Britain – as only slightly less

suspect than the men who came to be referred to as “renegades.” Claire Norton has argued that the idea of forcible conversion to Islam, though it was a key part of anxieties that surrounded captivity, was likely quite rare in the lived experience of British captives, because forcible conversion is forbidden by Islamic law and “any conversion obtained under duress is considered invalid” (261-2). This is, of course, not to say that it never happened: captives like Joseph Pitts, discussed below, prove that, while unusual, forcible conversions could be a threat to the English person held captive. Stephen Clissold confirms Norton’s research, and points out the impracticalities of forcing Christians to convert. Because Muslim law forbade Muslims from performing certain kinds of labor, like working on the galley-oar (5), it would make little sense to force captive Christians to convert. Considering the relative freedom that the British captive could gain in the East simply by converting to Islam, there are some understandable reasons why British thinkers, the British press, and British culture in general feared that the “young men who had the makings of good soldiers and corsairs” would convert in captivity, and could prosper financially by doing so (5).

The renegade, as these converts came to be known, played an important part in forming British ideas about Barbary captivity. Sayre points out that “nearly every Barbary captivity narrative includes the narrator’s account of how he or she was urged to convert to Islam, and also evokes the bugbear of the renegades, the Christians who converted” (352). As far as I am able to determine, there exists no surviving narrative by any captive who permanently turned renegade. By silencing the renegade, British literary culture effectively silenced their transgressions, and even in fiction when these renegades appear – invariably male, as if Aubin

and Haywood purposely posit that there is, essentially, no such being as the female renegade — they appear with violent intentions.

### Captives on Captivity

Considering, then, what we know about the specter of Barbary captivity and the way that it affected how Britons saw themselves, each other, and the Turks and Barbarians who roamed just off their coasts, the popularity of captivity narratives is understandable. The formulaic, generic conventions of captivity narratives mark them as a genre that serves a figurative, political, and social purpose, and I question Norton's claims that it is "probably impossible, and therefore rather pointless" to establish the "veracity of particular incidents...within individual captivity narratives" (260). As both archaeologist Mike Parker Pearson, author of *In Search of the Red Slave: Shipwreck and Captivity in Madagascar* and Giles Milton, author of *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and North Africa's One Million European Slaves* would argue, the search for the truth within captivity narratives is hardly "pointless." Indeed, the narratives of Pellow, Robert Drury (whose story is explored in Pearson's work) and other captives like Joseph Pitts were, for the most part, taken for truth in the eighteenth century. The publication of their narratives, complete with horrific details about their captivity, inevitably caused both Pellow and Pitts significant social and emotional distress.

Colley suggests that captives:

might feel on their return home under pressure to tell their version of events. Not just as a form of therapy, but as a means of reassuring friends, relations, and neighbors that they were still the same people as before, with the same loyalties, even though this was rarely true in fact. (85)

Colley's statement is in line with what we see in the work of Joseph Pitts, for example, which goes to painstaking lengths to try to erase the captivity experience from Pitts's body. Published in 1704, *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans, with an Account of the Author being taken Captive* documents Pitts's captivity, including his conversion to Islam. Because of his conversion, Pitts enjoyed "the privileges of a free citizen of the Turkish community" and actually worked on a Barbary corsair that "preyed upon Christian shipping in the Mediterranean" (Vitkus 219). Upon his return to England, however, Pitts had a "need to purify himself and to clear his name" (219). His contemporaries in England would have "seen him as contaminated by his intimate and extended contact with the Islamic other" (219) and would have required reassurance that he did not forget his allegiances to England. Pitts's narrative clearly establishes that he turned to Islam because he was tortured, but also suggests that his case is rare, and he accuses other returned captives of "vanity" and attempting to evoke "something very affecting" in the narration of *their* conversions because, according to him, "they never, or at least very seldom, use any such severities" to convert Christians (306). His case, however, is different. Pitts describes how he is "unmercifully dealt with" but does not suggest why he, unlike the others he criticizes, is treated this way.

Pitts's story is interesting because he relates that his forced conversion begins with his master's barber. He writes that he "struggled with them [his master, his servants, and the barber] but by stronger force my hair was cut off, and the barber went about to shave my head, my patron all the while holding my hands" (Vitkus 311). He is then forced into Turkish habit while "crying and weeping" (311). There is enough evidence here to suggest one way in which Pitts aims to 'purify' himself for his British audience. This scene evokes those we see in fictional

works – like Haywood’s *Philidore and Placentia* and *The Fruitless Enquiry* – where the hero is circumcised as a sign of his conversion, or castrated as a form of punishment. Considering that sexual violence against men was rumored to be part of Ottoman slavery (Snader, 163; Matar *Islam in Britain*, 53; Thorn, 170), and taking into account Pitts’s profession as a pirate, not a eunuch, this moment can be read as one evoking forcible circumcision to mark Pitts’s conversion to Islam. This act permanently marked the captive’s body, and the captive himself, as invariably different from his fellow men. Hair, as Pitts seems to realize, grows back, foreskin does not. As Matar explains, Henry Bynam, a seventeenth-century priest of the Church of England “instructed communities to check on the returning captives to make sure that they had not been circumcised” (*Britain and Barbary* 52). In this case, contrary to Norton’s suggestions, the “figurative” violence in Pitts’ narrative actually serves to hide, rather than to exaggerate, the realities of sexual violence against men. Curiously, Pitts suggests that his experience could have been much worse, and then offers two examples to his readers of fates he seems to perceive as being worse than death. He could be like “another Englishman [he] knew” who waited until his ship home to arrive only to change his mind and “[choose] rather to be a Mohammedan than to return to his own country” (Vitkus 314). Another, he says, “went home to his own country, came again to Algier and voluntarily, without the least force used towards him, became a Mohammedan” (314). For Pitts, forcible conversion is bad, but willingly joining the Muslim faith is much worse. What becomes clear even in this short discussion is the ambiguous nature of travel to the East and the relationship between Britons and those who lived in the Ottoman empire. For Aubin and Haywood, these ambiguities set the perfect scene for texts that aim to offer a new idea of femininity.



## Ladies First? Women Writing Captivity

In order to study the female captivity narrative, we must consider it in fiction. Linda Colley, in her work on Elizabeth Marsh, points out that though Marsh is “not the first woman claiming Britain as her home” to be forced into Barbary captivity, she is “the first woman to record her experiences” and she does not do so until 1767 (*Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh* 61). Indeed, the only other women to be held captive in the ‘East’ who recorded their experiences were Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, Quakers who were held by the inquisition on the Island of Malta.

Though it is impossible to know the number of women taken into captivity, or the date at which women began to be a target for piracy, female captives were a fact of life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. The lack of writing about them is attributed by Colley to the fact that they were “always a minority” and a topic only for “dry, government documents” (128). Matar attributes the lack of attention female captives received to the fact that “no English writer could address a situation where the compatriots he described would be captives rather than captors” (*Britain and Barbary* 93). Both critics seemingly disregard the role that Barbary captives play in early eighteenth-century fiction and drama. It is clear from dramatic works like Robert Greene’s 1594 play *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*, Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1623), as well as works like *The Treaty of Algiers* and *The Baths of Algiers* by Cervantes that Barbarian slavery was very much on the minds of authors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the range of fictional texts about Barbary captivity are those written by Penelope Aubin (1721’s *The Adventures of Count de Vinevil and His Family* and *Life and Amorous Adventures of*

*Lucinda*, 1722's *The Noble Slaves*, and 1723's *Charlotta du Pont*) and those by Eliza Haywood (*The Fruitless Enquiry* and *Philidore and Placentia*).

Oriental narratives were wildly popular in the early eighteenth century, though they were frequently “branded as frivolous, feminine romance” by scholars and literary critics (Bekkaoui 154). These texts frequently featured tales of white women who willingly “defect to the Moorish fold” (154), and join the harems of rich and handsome Turkish princes. Shaftesbury, who offers advice to authors in his 1711 work *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, believed novels to be a threat to the cultural purity of the English nation. Noting that the “cruel spectacles and barbarities are [...] found to please, and, in some tempers, to please beyond all other subjects” (151-2), Shaftesbury calls for vigilance around the effects these texts could have on women. He cites Shakespeare's *Othello*, arguing that even the playwright would be stunned to see “the fair sex of this island...be so seduced as to...change their natural inclination for fair, candid and courteous knights into a passion for a mysterious race of black enchanters” (155). More specifically, Shaftesbury feared that positive representations of ‘exotic’ Turkish men could urge young English women to “resign fathers, relations, countrymen and country to follow the fortunes of a hero of the black tribe” because “Moorish fancy, in its plain and literal sense, prevails strongly at this time” (155). Shaftesbury's fears that English women would run off to Barbary at the slightest provocation may seem ridiculous, but his testament that a “Moorish fancy” prevailed “strongly” in the eighteenth century is reflected in fiction (155).

## Our British Fair? Women's Oriental Tales in the Eighteenth Century

While some of Eliza Haywood's works are the object of serious critical attention, much of her oeuvre remains unexplored. Penelope Aubin's works are, much like Haywood's 'lesser' fiction, consistently ignored by critics, with the exception of a few who are attempting to trace her lineage, name her religious faith, or explore her family life. Though these issues are important, especially in the case of a woman we know next-to-nothing about, the quest to solve these puzzles about Aubin's origins have distracted critics from the very important cultural and political work that her texts perform.

Studies of women's writing have long focused on the role that novels and non-fiction prose written by women play in the British imagination. Paula Backscheider has written that "one of the most common objections made to women's novel reading was that it gave them an unrealistic idea of the world" and, in a sense, these narratives offer a kind of fantasy that was largely a fictional creation. No doubt, for example, the reality of Ottoman slavery was much worse than either Aubin or Haywood acknowledge, but I argue that the role of these texts is to offer women a glimpse of the lives that would be open to them if they were conceived of differently by their male counterparts.

Works by Robert Shoemaker and Amanda Vickery remind us that the totality of discursive constructions of femininity in the eighteenth century, and the degree to which these constructions were subscribed to by 'actual' women, is still somewhat of a mystery. My contention, however, is that Aubin and Haywood feature women who are prevented from adhering to these ideologies, and in doing so, demonstrate the ways in which female travel could be of significant benefit not only to women themselves, but to life in the English metropole.

## Aubin and Haywood: The Oriental Texts

Scholarship on Aubin's work in the twentieth century has been limited to a few scholars who have concentrated primarily on whether or not Aubin was Catholic, (McBurney (1957), Richetti (1969), Turner (1992), Gollapudi (2005)), and has focused on evidence either to prove or disprove this fact. As Sarah Prescott writes, "critical opinion of Penelope Aubin has been based on her own creation of herself as a moral commentator, mostly in the prefatory material to her novels, but also in the connections she counterfeited between herself and other respected women of her time, most significantly Elizabeth Singer Rowe" (100-1). Though Aubin's novels are less overtly scandalous than works by Behn, Manley and Haywood, the critical definition of Aubin as a 'didactic moralist' does not adequately capture the nuances of her texts, and much of her work can easily be read alongside Haywood's in terms of the potential to find scandal. I follow Chris Mounsey, who has questioned evaluations of Aubin's work as being "staunchly Catholic" and has argued that this reading is constructed more by scholars who have misread Aubin's intentions than by Aubin herself.

Most recently, Aparna Gollapudi and C.M. Owen have written of Aubin's work in a wider literary and economic context. Gollapudi has argued that Aubin's texts involve a negotiation between two popular genres of the day – travel writing and amatory fiction – and suggests that the "intriguing and as-yet-uninvestigated effect" of this negotiation forms narratives that "realign the gender assumptions on which both travel and amatory fiction are based" (670). Though Gollapudi erroneously joins William McBurney et al. in their assertions that Aubin's was Catholic and her texts are based on a Catholic morality, her work does allow for an "assessment of the possible roles for women in the grand imperial subtexts of the genre"

(670). Owen has suggested that Aubin takes an economic view of the bodies of her heroines, noting that in eighteenth-century society “both gold and virginity are of stable value” and in Aubin’s texts “the two are exchangeable and essential to a harmonious social order” (144). Gold, and in some cases, female bodies, are exchanged among merchants, but virginity is a separate issue. Not all of Aubin’s ‘heroic’ women are virgins, but this lack of virginity is not a handicap to the heroine’s happiness or the establishment of the home and family in the text.

Haywood’s texts, especially *Love in Excess* (1719-20) and *Fantomina* (1725) have been the object of significant critical study. Margaret Doody has drawn the connection between the novels of Haywood (and, I argue, Aubin) and seventeenth-century romances, but in this case, we see a reversal of the rescue plot that features a hero who rescues a frightened and passive heroine. Doody’s contention that “relentless passion stalks the heroine, who becomes increasingly powerless, in a hot-house world of seduction from where there is no escape” (142) is not one that applies to Haywood’s *The Fruitless Enquiry* and *Philidore and Placentia*, nor does it apply to Aubin’s heroines either. By the end of the works of both women, the heroines have emerged as powerful arbiters of their own destiny rather succumbing to fear and powerlessness.

Both Mary Ann Schofield and Paula Backscheider have pointed out that Haywood’s texts offer varying portrayals of women that provide new ideas about female agency, sexuality, violence and fantasy. The notion that women, and female experience, cannot be represented as one monolithic category characterizes much of Haywood’s writing. This argument adds to Haywood’s rejection of a monolithic identity by forcing a reconsideration of the role of women in relationships with the East.

Critical exploration of Aubin's and Haywood's works have benefitted from an upsurge in writing about less well-known women writers of the eighteenth century, but at the same time the significant role that Eastern captivity plays in these texts has been ignored. The remaining pages of this chapter focus on four novels by Penelope Aubin, here referred to by their short titles, *Count Vinevil*, *Charlotta du Pont*, *Lucinda* and *The Noble Slaves*, and two shorter texts by Eliza Haywood, *The Fruitless Enquiry* and *Philidore and Placentia*.

#### Masculinity's Failures:

The heroines of the oriental tales written by Aubin and Haywood actively engage with the threat of Ottoman captivity and in so doing prove themselves, contrary to opinions about female weakness and vulnerability, to be better equipped to deal with the horrors of captivity than their male counterparts. These texts highlight a number of issues prominent in discussions of gender and the access women have to the eighteenth-century public sphere, but the women in Aubin's and Haywood's texts demonstrate that if a young woman's virtue is threatened, this is most likely to occur at the hands of European, rather than Turkish, men.

Although Snader has suggested that these texts feature women who are "deprived of male protection," I will argue that male 'protectors' are exactly the people who threaten these women (*Caught Between Worlds* 153). Indeed, by attending to this threat, I argue that we can see that heroines often end up in the East because they have been victims of betrayal at the hands of men. Ardelisa, the heroine of Aubin's *Count de Vinevil*, falls victim to kidnap by a Turkish sultan because her father is upset at being "neglected by his sovereign" (9-10) and leaves France to live in Turkey. That this move makes the Count's charge (who is also Ardelisa's lover) nervous reflects anxieties about the safety of women in the Ottoman empire, as Longueville

declares, “should some lustful Turk, mighty in slaves and power, once see that lovely face; what human power could secure you from his impious arms, and me from death!” (17-8).

Concerned to restore his lagging wealth and social importance, Ardelisa’s father exchanges her safety, her virtue, and her life for his own social and financial wealth. Ardelisa becomes one of the goods he transports with him to Turkey to trade for material wealth. This failure on the part of men to see their obligations to women as anything more than trading them to a husband in exchange for wealth appears time and time again in the works studied here.

A failure on the part of men to protect women is a theme that appears in the other works by Aubin and Haywood discussed here. Lucinda, the eponymous heroine of Aubin’s *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda*, is taken captive twice: first by an Englishman and then by a Barbary pirate. Lucinda’s parents, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s father, try to force her to marry a “disagreeable” man who is “forty years of age” despite the fact that she has secretly contracted a marriage with her neighbor, Charles (10). Her father eventually reveals the mercenary nature of this marriage when he demands that his daughter submit for his pecuniary benefit. He asks her:

what will be the return, think you, of such inconstancy and broken faith? The very apprehension of it almost deprives me of life, and I had rather die ten thousand deaths than see the only happiness I wish for or desire, in the arms and possession of any other person. (10)

Her father’s “happiness” is in Roderick’s fortune, rather than his daughter’s well-being, and in an attempt to escape this marriage, Lucinda is kidnapped by Alphonsus, a jilted suitor.

The heroine of Aubin's 1723 *Charlotta du Pont* also falls victim to a father who fails to look out for her best interests and instead gives in to his desires for a scheming prostitute despite the protestations and warnings of his closest friends and advisors. Monsieur du Pont falls into a "tormenting passion" after meeting Dorinda at the theatre, and "yet having no particular knowledge of her" he "in two months time...seal'd his ruin" by marrying her (25). Dorinda hates the attention and affection Du Pont showers on Charlotta, his only child from his first marriage, and plans to get rid of her. In her rage and envy, Dorinda sells Charlotta to a ship's captain who transports her to Virginia. Dorinda seals Charlotta's fate by telling her father that the young girl was drowned during a routine airing at sea, a story he believes without reservation. By allowing a woman he knows nothing about into his home simply because he lusts after her, M. du Pont renders his daughter, like Ardelisa, an object of exchange surrendered at the mere promise of pleasure. By ignoring the advice of the other men around him, failing to control his passions, and failing to examine the evidence surrounding his daughter's reported death, becomes a catalyst for his daughter's torments, which eventually lead to her captivity in Barbary.

These situations repeat themselves in Haywood's works as well. *The Fruitless Inquiry* features an inset narrative about the private marriage Montrano and Iseria conduct because Montrano's uncle has forbidden the union. Montrano's uncle holds the family's wealth because his father has "wasted the best part of the estate which was to descend to him on a courtesan, of whom he was so fond, that he quitted one of the best wives in the world and lived wholly with her" (49). Because Montrano's father, like Charlotta du Pont's, has allowed his own lust and passion to trump the well-being of his family, Montrano's future is at the mercy of his uncle.



Unfortunately, Iseria finds herself in an equally unpleasant situation. She has “but a small dowry, and that too in hands whence [she] could not easily call it out” (49). Her brother inherited her father’s wealth and then promptly departed for a grand tour, leaving the girl in the care of guardians who grant her little access to ready money. Eventually, Montrano’s uncle finds out about this illicit marriage, sends Montrano away, and leaves Iseria alone in a rented house. She falls into a “swoon, which had like to have been fatal to me, for the people of the house, surprised at what had happened, came not into the chamber for a considerable time” (50). When they do enter the room, they find her “on the floor, naked, cold, and in all appearance dead” (510). In his rage that Montrano’s marriage netted him no property, money, or status, Montrano’s uncle fails to see the value in protecting the women in his family, and leaves the naked, unconscious Iseria alone in a strange house.

That Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines are at the mercy of men who are more interested in exchanging them for money or an object highlights the ways in which women in the early eighteenth-century could be conceived of by some as a goods for exchange, rather than beings with their own will and desires. Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines – because of their status as objects even in the eyes of their closest male guardians – become targets of sexual violence, and in the course of their texts both authors describe this objectification as worse than the confines of Ottoman slavery.

What is fascinating in these episodes of Turkish captivity is that confinement to a harem all but terminates the use of women as objects of exchange. Because of the requirement that women be veiled when they leave the harem, they are kept free of the objectifying gaze of men who believe their worth is defined by the desire of other men to possess them. More than

this, the women belong to the sultan, so they cannot be viewed as objects of exchange to be passed between men. Beyond this, harem women are, in these texts, awash in money, something which their captive counterparts in England often lack.

Margaret Doody has argued that Haywood's novels "suggest an environment in which even the resisting heroine is helpless because she is imprisoned in a world of sexual passion" (150) and, were we to take this imprisonment literally as well as figuratively, the same is true for Aubin's heroines as well. A close reading of these texts reveal this imprisonment as largely the result of betrayal and objectification at the hands of European men who capitalize on the vulnerabilities of women. Of the women discussed in this chapter, Aubin's Lucinda, three separate women from her 1722 novel *The Noble Slaves*, and Charlotta and Isabinda, heroines of *Charlotta du Pont*, are all held captive by Christian men *before* they are taken into Barbary captivity. The same can be said for Haywood's women as well: Haywood's Elphania is held in prison in Europe before she is transported into slavery, and Placentia is essentially held at the mercy of the captain of the ship on which she travels to find her lover. In most cases, captivity at the hands of these white, Christian men is figured as more dangerous, and in every case, it precedes captivity in the Ottoman empire.

Lucinda is the first of Aubin's heroines to be held captive by a Christian man. As a direct result of this captivity, she is transported to the Ottoman empire and held captive there as well. Having been forced by her family to agree to marry her father's choice, Roderick, Lucinda and her lover Charles plan to run away together to get married. Lucinda leaves her father's house "when it [is] almost dark," and flees towards the water where a waiting boat is to take her to meet Charles (13). Unfortunately, on her way, she is "seized by two men who by

force, notwithstanding the resistance and the exclamations [she] made for assistance, forc'd [her] into a waiting boat" (13). The men tell her "that what they had done was by the order of their master, and that the passion he had for [her] oblig'd him to this treatment" (13). They promise that "he [will] soon be with them to pay [her] all the civility imaginable" (14). Her captor turns out to be Alphonsus, a "gentleman of the town," who tries to force her to agree to become his wife. He tells her that if she refuses to marry him, she will be "constrained to pass the remainder of [her] life in solitude" at his country home (19). Like a woman confined to a harem, Lucinda has little choice but to capitulate, but unlike women in the harem, she has to surrender all her freedoms. Alphonsus, however, is no barbarous Turkish prince, but a supposedly refined, civilized Englishman schooled in the rules of manners and the customs of politeness and chivalry.

Upon discovering Lucinda hidden in his uncle's house, Lewis, Alphonsus's nephew rescues her from his uncle's captivity, fools her into thinking Charles is already married, and convinces her to marry him. Lucinda agrees to the marriage because she realizes that traveling "alone with two men" (Lewis and his servant) is dangerous to her reputation (32). Lewis eventually leaves her for a French mistress and Lucinda is forced into a bigamous marriage to Don Antonio, who had been courting her throughout her marriage. This relationship with Don Antonio suggests two things: first that Lucinda is aware of the potential risk she is in as a woman without the protection of a man, and that, even while married, women face constant threats of sexual violence at the hands of men. After a series of events that see her reunited with Charles in captivity, the pair are freed together and return home, with Lucinda dressed in men's clothing for safety. "Almost as soon as [they are] on shore" in England, they are taken a "press

gang and forced into the ship for service” against the Dutch (104). They easily escape the press gang, but this scene helps to demonstrate that captivity in a Christian country, at the hands of Christian men and a supposedly civilized government, was a very real possibility for women in the early eighteenth century and a threat more dangerous than that of Ottoman captivity.

That women are threatened more by Christian men than they are by Ottoman Turks, and that this threat is in many ways more unprepared-for because it exists in the supposed safety of home rather than abroad where dangers were said to lurk, is further suggested by the stories of three women in Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves*. Elenora, the wife of the governor of Barbary who helps Don Lopez in exchange for his promise of marriage (though he is already married), tells her story as part of one of Aubin’s characteristic inset narratives. Her history echoes Lucinda’s: at the moment that she is to marry her preferred suitor, a man named Alphonso (not to be confused with *Lucinda’s* Alphonsus) who has admired her from afar, kidnaps her. Alphonso is clear about his purpose, telling Elenora that: “whilst I possess you, you shall be mine, and only death can free you from me” (65). Death does, eventually, free her: she kills him just as pirates take the ship on which the pair are traveling. Elenora is sold to the governor of Barbary, and he takes her as his wife. It is Alphonso’s transgressions toward her that lead to her being held in the Governor’s harem, and Eleanora configures the captivity from which she escapes as far less tolerable than the slavery into which she is sold.

Charlott, a secondary character in Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves*, relates her story in another inset narrative that gives Aubin’s work a similar narrative pattern as Galland’s *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. This text, in which Scheherazade, the narrator and heroine, attempts to extend her life by telling the prince who has threatened to kill her a series of tales, most of which

include one or more inset narratives within each 'main' tale, was popular at the time Aubin was writing her early novels. The daughter of rich parents, Charlott is kidnapped by a suitor and taken to a house he has hired "for his fatal purpose" (152). Though "[she] use[s] prayers, tears, and resist[s] all [she is] able," he rapes her and keeps her imprisoned for three years, during which time she gives birth to three children. Eventually her kidnapper sells her (again, treating her as nothing more than a good to be exchanged for gold) to "an Arabian captain, or chief of a tribe" (159). Like Elenora, Charlott only finds herself in Barbary captivity because she has first become the victim of a European captor and again like Elenora, Charlott quickly finds favor with her Arabian captor and lives a life of power and privilege in his harem.

Finally, after escaping from Ottoman captivity, Teresa, wife of Don Lopez in Aubin's *Noble Slaves*, is kidnapped by Don Lopez's nephew. Enraptured by Teresa, Don Fernando has his servants take her to his home. While "bound upon [his] bed, Teresa decries her captivity in terms so moving it would have melted the hearts of barbarians" (196). That Aubin chooses the term 'barbarian' here is telling, specifically because in this case, Teresa imagines that a so-called 'barbarian' would take more pity on her than the European man ever would. Ana Hontanilla has argued that that British travel writings have produced an image of "a decadent and backward Spanish empire" in particular moments when Spain was a competitor for colonial territories (121). She makes the point, however, that Spain was also "perceived as a market for British commercial and economic advantage" (122) and one concludes here that the difference between Don Lopez and Don Fernando is that one, Don Lopez, a merchant and trader, is aligned with a positive contribution to British mercantile trade, and the other, Don Fernando,

has become linked through his love of excess with the “decadent and backward” views of the aristocracy in Europe circulating in eighteenth-century England.

In *Charlotta du Pont*, the ship on which Charlotta sails to Virginia is attacked by a pirate vessel “bearing English colors” (35). This scene highlights yet another danger that the European woman faces from her countryman: the pirates who emerge from this ship flying friendly colors are “English [and] French...belonging to the crew at Madagascar” (35). Though these pirates are European men, raised with the values of European, Christian masculinity, one of the captain’s first acts upon gaining the ship is to attempt to rape Charlotta. She resists, telling him that “death shall not frighten me into a compliance with your unjust request” (45), which prompts him to invent several bizarre schemes in order to trick her into capitulating to his desires. He even attempts an old standard of the eighteenth-century rake and tries to fool her by disguising himself in the clothing of the man she has recently fallen in love with on board the ship. Though his attempts ultimately fail, what becomes clear is that Englishmen are just as willing to attempt a plot on a woman’s virtue as a Barbary pirate or Turkish sultan in these narratives.

After she is shipwrecked on an island along with some of the other captives aboard the ship, Charlotta discovers Isabinda, a “white woman who seem’d to be very young and very handsome” (86), who has been kidnapped by Domingo, her servant, and brought to the island. Domingo tells Isabinda that his lust has driven him to “resolve to possess” her even though he knows her father will kill him if he is caught. Shortly after the pair land on the island, he achieves his goal and takes advantage of Isabinda when she falls into a panic-stricken swoon. He

keeps her prisoner on the island for two years before they are discovered living in a cave carved in the side of a mountain, busily raising their young child.

Again and again Aubin puts the women in her texts in situations where it is clear that, whatever the putative damages of travel for women might be, far worse violence, grounded in patriarchal attitudes toward women, awaited them at home. This phenomenon appears in Haywood's works too, as European men put *The Fruitless Enquiry's* Elphania and *Philidore and Placentia's* Placentia at risk of rape and captivity long before they ever reach the Ottoman empire. When Montrano's uncle sends him away, he is ultimately taken captive by an "Incan King" (possibly a royal figure from Ceylon) and is put in charge of the royal gardens. The King's wife, Elphania, sees Montrano and takes pity on him because she recognizes him as a countryman. During their visits in the garden, Elphania relates her history to Montrano: born in Venice, her family concluded that her "inclinations" were "somewhat more gay than was consistent with the customs" of her home town and sent her to Brussels (62). During her time there, a Dutch captain seduces her, then leaves her penniless, a habit that Elphania declares is "natural to mankind" (62). She and her maid are "reduced to very great hardships" by his abandonment, and are forced by necessity to "do something contrary to the laws" of Brussels to survive.<sup>4</sup> They are caught and transported to the island to "expiate, by an eternal slavery, a sin which nothing but necessity could have made us guilty of" (63). The European custom of transporting criminals is its own form of captivity, and, in this case, it is brought on by the Dutch captain's betrayal. At the very least, here, we are forced to consider that, unlike women in England, the 'ruined' woman in the sultan's harem are, at the very least, cared for during the remainder of her life.

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<sup>4</sup> Elphania never reveals what it is that the women are convicted of doing.

Haywood's Placentia follows her love Philidore to the East only to find herself the target of the unwanted advances of the captain of the ship on which she travels. Traveling alone aboard a ship the way she does marks Placentia as a woman with a questionable reputation, and the captain, seeing that she is unprotected and therefore apparently available to him, tries to seduce her. When she protests, he tells her that his "present business is the gratification of [his passion]" and that she "must strangely differ from [her] sex, if I hear [her] not some time hence confess that the fury of my impatience is a more agreeable testimony of love than cowardly submission" (218). She continues to deny him, and his passion becomes so uncontrolled that he appears to transform into a kind of beast unable to control his urges. During this exchange he becomes increasingly violent: he grows "all enflamed and his eyes sparkled with lust and rage" (218) and is about to rape her when the ship is boarded by Barbary pirates and Placentia and the captain are taken to a slave market to be sold. The captain quickly reaches a deal with their new owner to allow him to satisfy his lust. He tells Placentia that "our present master will gladly give you to my embraces for the propagation of slaves"<sup>5</sup> and prepares again to take advantage of her (219). Clearly intent on exchanging Placentia's safety for the propagation of more slaves, Haywood's portrayal of the owner here draws even more attention to the ways in which women are repeatedly made into objects for exchange in order for men to amass wealth.

In Aubin's preface to *The Noble Slaves*, she defines the Ottoman empire as a place where "the monarch gives loose to his passions" and "thinks it no crime to keep as many women for his use as his lustful appetite excites him to like" (x). It is clear from her text, however, that the place she is describing is Europe, and the threat is not from an Ottoman sultan, but from

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<sup>5</sup> This scene, of course, evokes what we know will become one of the rhetorical challenges of the slave narrative genre: how to represent the fact of female slaves raped by their masters in order to produce more slaves.



the European man who barely seems able to control his “lustful appetites,” and who actively hunts for women with whom he can “give loose to [his] passions” (x). Though Karen Zagrodnik accurately argues that pirates attacking ships are looking for “gold, travelers for ransom, and ships to continue their unsanctioned pursuits” and notes that “an unprotected female passenger on board is a treasure the pirate captain reserves for his private disposal” (102), she incorrectly assumes that “two types of men force themselves on women: pirates and sultans who own seraglios” (102). Zagrodnik’s analysis does not account for the more complicated understanding of sexual violence in eighteenth-century England that Aubin’s and Haywood’s texts are eliciting. By rendering the European man not only culpable in the failure to preserve the virtue of women he is responsible for, for perpetuating a system wherein, for some men, women are viewed as objects of exchange, and for his blatant attacks on feminine virtue because of his inability to control his passions, Aubin and Haywood charge the eighteenth-century male with failing to fulfill his role in society, while at the same time drawing attention to the ways in which Turkish men fulfill these ideals of masculinity instead.

Aubin’s heroines and Haywood’s Elphania have experiences in Ottoman captivity that suggest that Barbarian slavery is the lesser of two evils when compared to captivity – whether through kidnap, betrayal, or a forced marriage – in England. That Aubin and Haywood mean these moments to be read side-by-side is obvious, and what we learn from this way of reading their captivity scenes is that eighteenth-century conceptions of masculinity, ethnicity, lust, and the ‘other’ man are more complicated than contemporary criticism often allows. One of the issues that Aubin’s and Haywood’s texts force their reader to consider, then, is that forms of foreign captivity can offer a woman a greater degree of protection from sexual assault than life at

home. In these situations, the foreign captor becomes a more benevolent ‘master’ than a European man. More importantly than this, however, is that Aubin and Haywood push their readers to consider that captivity abroad may be read as a space where a woman can fulfill a fantasy of free circulation without facing the threat of sexual violence from men.

### Fiction’s Captivity

If we compare the experiences of Aubin’s earliest heroines, Ardelisa and Lucinda, we can see the ways in which the British and Barbarian captivity experience is contrasted between texts. The ways that Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines experience captivity in these situations makes it clear that, if a woman is to be held in a kind of captivity, foreign captivity is posited as a positive alternative when compared to captivity at home. When she is taken captive by Alphonsus, Lucinda suffers “a greater dissatisfaction and pain,” than if “[she] had been condemned to immediate execution” (15). While being held captive, she “[flies] into the greatest agonies of despair, [tears] the hair from [her] head, [rents sic] her] clothes to pieces, and commit[s] a thousand unaccountable actions” (15). When Alphonsus finally reveals himself as her captor, she demands to know what she has done to “provoke [him] to render [her] the most miserable creature in the world” (18). She is answered with a “disdainful smile” and is told that he has taken her to this “solitary and lonely place” in order to convince her to marry him. He tells her that if she does not agree, she will be “constrained to pass the remainder of [her] life in this solitude” (19). Alphonsus gives her seven days to decide whether to be his wife or to “waste and unprofitably consume [her] youth and beauty in this solitary and comfortless condition” (20). This kind of captivity – rife with images of waste and decay – is easily contrasted to the experiences that Ardelisa has in Ottoman captivity.

Originally successful in avoiding captivity by the first Turkish prince to fall in love with her, Ardelisa and her maid fall victim to a second. This experience, however, is vastly different from the one Lucinda faces. Unlike Alphonsus's oath to keep Lucinda captive until she wastes away, Osmin orders that "no violence should be offered to" the women, and commands that nothing "they have about them" should be taken from them (63). Still unclear whether the disguised Ardelisa is male or female, Osmin guarantees her safety no matter what. He tells her to "fear not the treatment I shall give you" and declares, "if you are a man...I will give you honors and wealth exceeding your imagination" (63). More importantly, and in direct contrast to the life of "solitary and comfortless condition" that Lucinda is offered, Osmin tells Ardelisa that if she is a woman, "here are apartments, where paintings, downy beds, and habits fit for to cover that soft frame, gardens to walk in, and food delicious, with faithful slaves to wait upon you, invite your stay; where I will feast each sense, and make you happy as morality can be" (65-4). If eighteenth-century women risked captivity at the hands of men when they married or were left without proper protection, Aubin depicts harem life as a place where this captivity at least offers the heroine an opportunity to thrive and, to some extent, redeem her honor. Aubin offers a feast of exotic, escapist fiction projected onto a space as far from the realities of captivity at home as possible. Her fiction grants women what they may not have in real life: the ability to escape the captivity they suffer (whether from kidnapping, mercenary marriage or restricted participation in public) and live fulfilling lives in which they can be their own agents. Indeed, in this case, the 'tyranny' of the East works in female favor: the prince's women are protected from sexual assault by the safety of the harem, and their status as 'harem women' keeps them safe when they venture abroad.

Aubin's Maria, featured in *The Noble Slaves*, faces a situation that (along with the inset stories of Elenora and Anna) clearly demonstrates that Ottoman captivity could be a positive alternative to captivity at home. After being shipwrecked, Teresa finds a "venerable man in Persian dress" living on the island and, during the relation of this man's story, we find out that he was once a rich merchant with his own harem. During that time, he purchased Maria, a Spanish captive, with the intention of adding her to his 'collection.' He tells us that he was so eager to sleep with her that he immediately "took her in my arms with a transport I had never known before...I kissed, embraced and showed her all the most tender marks of esteem...Unable to delay my bliss, I took her by the hand [and] led her into the bed chamber" (28). Her reaction to this, however, halts him in his tracks. He tells Teresa that: "she fell upon her kness, still silent, not answering one word, and showed such fear and grief, I was shocked; my blood cooled, and I resolved to court her to my arms, and stay until she would make me happy" (28). With his passions tempered at the sight of her tears, the Persian shows much more compassion and control than European men who ignore female distress to instantly gratify their lusts. Eventually, after he treats her "as if [he] had been her slave, and used her so," she falls in love with him, convinces him to become a Christian, and marries him. Here, Aubin asks us to consider the conduct of the Persian man alongside that of his English counterparts, and intends for us to find the manners of the Englishman, rather than the foreigner, lacking.

Maria, however, is not the only woman who has an experience in Barbary captivity that provides a foil to the possibility of captivity in England. Elenora relates that after pirates sell her to him:

the [Ottoman] governor treated me kindly, professed to love me passionately, and forced me to his bed; after which he deny'd me nothing...and for eight years, though he had many other new mistresses, gave me the preference, and loved me with the same ardor as at first. (67-8)

Contrasted with the experience of other women forced into sexual relationships, Elenora is, at least, offered a life filled with riches, power and, most of all, safety. The governor even continues to “give her preference,” which puts him in marked contrast to the European men who abandon their mistresses when they tire of them. In contrast, we need only to look to the disgraced or ruined heroine of eighteenth-century fiction to see how life in the harem could be considered a positive alternative.

Anna, the young girl who works as Elenora's maid, has her own tale of captivity. Anna tells Don Lopez and Hauteville that her family, once very wealthy, was ruined after her grandfather helped lead the “the Huguenot party against his sovereign Lewis the fourteenth [sic] [and] lost both his life and his estate” (70). Though Anna's grandfather died for a cause an English audience would consider noble, he does so at the expense of the security of his family. After being raised by an aunt, Anna's mother is kidnapped by an acquaintance who was “forced to have recourse to stratagems to accomplish his desires” (70). Anna is the product of this violent, captive union, and after the death of her mother, is put in a convent. Unfortunately, Anna is Venetian, and “the Turks, gaining many unfortunate victories over the Venetians” take her captive during their fight for the city. She is quick to note, though, that her “tender years preserved my virtue” (71). In this case, we read the experience of Anna, who “suppose[d] the governor reserved me for his use when I was older” against the experience of her mother who,

despite *her* tender age, is kidnapped and raped by a European, Christian man. Once again, it is the European who is the offender against the unprotected, innocent European woman, and the Ottoman man who actively attempts to preserve the virtue of a young girl.

Haywood's captured Venetian woman Elphania experiences captivity in much the same way as Anna. Condemned to "eternal slavery" by the courts for her crimes in Brussels, Elphania is transported and "exposed for sale in the slave markets" (63). When the "king of the Incas"<sup>6</sup> sees her, he immediately "raise[s] her to his bed and throne" (63), providing her the opportunity to live in possession of the luxuries of the East and the safety of his harem. For Haywood, the horrors of Ottoman captivity are overshadowed by the heroine's experience being held at the hands of European men.

What is clear here is that, for Aubin and Haywood, any attempt to contextualize and fictionalize the captivity experiences of European women abroad must also include a concomitant discussion of their captivity experiences at home. In their fictions, the deeper threat lies not only in the failure of European men to properly protect women in their charge (a necessity considering women are not properly educated to protect themselves) but also to control their own lusts and passions. Diane Long Hoeveler has written that Haywood's heroines (and, I argue, Aubin's as well) are often "at the mercy of Oriental despots" but sometimes also "welcome their kindnesses after brushes with European brutes" (53). Domestic captivity in these texts – including the kind experienced by women sacrificed for mercenary marriages in England – is given its mirror image in these scenes of Ottoman captivity. Female confinement in both areas includes the threat of sexual violence, but Aubin and Haywood offer

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<sup>6</sup> Though Haywood insists that Elphania is sold to the King of the 'Incas,' she is actually "sent to Ceylon" to serve her punishment. That is, she is sent to the territory now known as Sri Lanka.

their English readers something they could not have in England: a luxurious fantasy world where they can free themselves from the threat of male sexual violence and circulation in public.

These texts draw attention to the scenes in which domestic captivity is given its less-violent mirror in Ottoman captivity. In doing so, Aubin and Haywood use their texts to help reduce the threat that the foreign man poses to the European woman. By forcing their readers to engage with the idea of domestic captivity and violence at home, Aubin and Haywood counter arguments about the need to prohibit women from traveling abroad in order to keep them safe. Because the domestic space is as threatening to female safety (and female agency) as the outside world, Aubin and Haywood petition for increasing freedom for English women by creating heroines who are able to withstand the threats of transculturation, even when their so-called strong, more rational, male counterparts cannot. This work, however, is merely the first part of a series of events that actually posit the woman traveling abroad as able to access important knowledge and resources kept hidden from men. Aubin and Haywood, beyond simply equipping their fictional women with the skills to travel and return safely, unscathed by the experience, contend that female agency, rather than being a liability, is necessary for the maintenance of British nationhood in the early years of the empire.

### Gone Renegade

Though it could be suggested that Aubin and Haywood are using the fictional worlds they create to posit a sort of 'best-case scenario' for European women held in the Ottoman empire, there is some evidence that the worlds that opened up to the likes of Elphania and Elenora are more than a fictional construction. Nabil Matar reminds us that: "Christian women attained social status through captivity. They also attained political status as they

facilitated exchange and trade” (*Britain and Barbary*, 103). This fact, he argues, “focused British public attention on the issue of miscegenation and interreligious sexuality. After all, if women spent months or years among the ‘Mahumetans,’ it was quite likely that they become sexually active, willingly or unwillingly” (*Islam in Britain* 105). That these arrangements were at times entered into willingly seemed almost impossible for the British public, but Matar notes that some women spent years waiting to be ransomed, while others were “never ransomed and actually may not have wanted to be ransomed, as they attained status and power by marrying high in the North African elite. As men found opportunity among the Muslims and were willing to convert and remain in North Africa, so did a few women” (92). Curiously – and in support of some of the elements in the fictions of Aubin and Haywood – Matar notes that:

the surviving evidence shows that many such women remained ‘English’ in their identity. Although they renounced their Christian religion, they maintained their commitment to their native land and compatriots. Even after a lifetime in the Harem of Mulay Ismail, one woman was still ‘English’ as her trading compatriots confirmed by addressing her as a ‘native of England’. Although the experience of enslavement was terrifying, a few women were able to acquire agency through their captivity to achieve status and wealth. (92)

The contrast between the women, even those who seem to have ‘gone native,’ and the renegade European man is made evident in Aubin’s and Haywood’s works. The renegade encountered in *The Noble Slaves* is not only “wicked as hell,” but the narrator also implies that he is involved in a homosexual relationship with his master, the governor. The implication, of course, is that the Spaniard has not only converted in his religion and manners, but in his sexual preference,



thus indicating that his transformation to the Ottoman 'other' is complete. The short yet significant passages in Aubin's and Haywood's works relating stories of renegades suggest to us that both authors understand the Ottoman empire as a place where men are easily seduced away from their home cultures, where they can strip themselves of their national identity and convert to Islam for the promise of money, women, or military glory.

Nabil Matar has argued that, for the white woman captured in Barbary, the "chance of escape was nearly nil," a contention that suggests that, once captured, the European woman had little choice other than to submit to the will of her new masters (*Britain and Barbary*, 95). Though Clissold suggests that attempts at escape were "sporadic" throughout the period, he also notes that many of these attempts "ended tragically" when groups of men, rather than single or multiple women, frequently died or were killed during escape attempts (71). Aubin and Haywood, however, create heroines who escape in droves and do so by contravening notions that women are passive captives in the hands of the Ottoman monster until their suitors rescue them. Not only do Aubin's and Haywood's heroines free *themselves* from captivity, but they are also the active agents in freeing their suitors. Here a confident and steadfast heroine essentially erases the possibility of 'going native,' and at the same time saves men from being permanently lost to Turkish life as well. In fact, in the face of threats by renegade Europeans and English pirates, and suggestions (like those made by Shaftesbury) that women are more susceptible to the temptations of the East than men are, it is the women in these texts who never surrender their European values or religious identities. In these texts, Aubin's and Haywood's heroines resist transculturation, and the failure of their male counterparts in these texts that serve as a foil for female triumph.

Aubin and Haywood posit the European woman as being more capable of navigating her way through Barbary captivity than their European male counterparts. Where we see the self-assured heroine leading her escape and the escape of others, we see the European man passively accepting his captivity with no plans for escape. In fact, where women resist transculturation to every extent they can, we see men readily ‘turning Turk.’ In *The Noble Slaves*, Aubin’s narrator tells us that “a Renegado Spaniard, wicked as hell, and one who renouncing Christianity had endeared himself to the governor of Algiers, and by him made rich” plays an integral role in holding European women captive (43). In another case, Aubin’s Charlotta du Pont is, shortly after being put on board a ship to Virginia, kidnapped again by a band of pirate renegades from England and France. Male renegades, according to Matar, “caused deep anxiety in their home communities...they became so committed to their new communities that they gave up their Christian names” and subsequently adopted Muslim ones (*Turks, Moors and Englishmen* 95). This anxiety is clearly present in Aubin’s and Haywood’s works: there are numerous European men in these texts who renounce their faith and nationhood to gain wealth and prestige in the East. In Haywood’s works especially, male sexual integrity is just as threatened in the East as that of women. As Jennifer Thorn has noted, castration, like that suffered by Montrano in *Fruitless Enquiry* is not only a matter of sexual violence, “but of reproductivity as well,” forcing the victim to realize – like so many women have been forced to realize – “what it means to be powerless to shape one’s fate” (170, 181).

The inset narrative of featuring the Christian eunuch in Haywood’s *Philidore and Placentia* offers a brief example. After falling in love with the daughter of the Bashaw who was holding him captive, he admits that he abandoned “all thoughts of [his] religion, kindred,

friends, country and freedom” to visit her secretly (206). After being caught, he is “deprived...of all power of ever injuring [the bashaw] or any other person in the manner I was about to do,” a punishment that left him “nothing but the name of man” (206). What is not present, even in characters living within harems for some time like Violetta and Elphania, is this anxiety reflected in the person of the woman in captivity. Like Montrano, the eunuch becomes a symbol of failed masculinity in what Thorn has suggested is a “punishment for aspiring to interracial dalliance” (185). Women, we will see, face no such temptation and suffer no such punishment. Despite Shaftesbury’s concerns, it is not “silly women” who are led astray by “black enchanters” but their male counterparts who fail to resist the sexual charms of the foreign woman.

One of the most important elements that keeps Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines relatively safe while being held captive is their willingness to take charge of their own fates. Even women who have proven themselves unable to escape from the harem eventually – with help from other women – do so, and return to Europe without facing the same kind of condemnation so-called ‘ruined women’ at home would face. Women like Violetta, Charlott, Elenora, and Elphania pursue domestic relationships with European men, who readily accept, and do not seem disturbed by, their sexual pasts.

In Aubin’s *Count de Vinevil*, the heroine’s rescue comes at her own hands when Longueville abandons his search for Ardelisa and assumes that his wife is dead. His parting words indicate his fear for her safety: “I am going from you for some tedious hours, which I shall pass with an impatience and concern which words cannot express” (27) but his vows turn out to be hollow. Following her captivity, escape and eventual return to Europe, we find out what

Longueville has been doing while Ardelisa has been held captive. He has “retired into a convent of Franciscan friars, where, notwithstanding his friends’ entreaties, he was determined to stay the rest of his life, if no news of [Ardelisa] being yet alive arrived, by a messenger whom he had sent to Turkey” (122). Instead of going to Turkey himself to try to find her, Longueville sends a messenger (who returns with inaccurate information) and then retires to a convent to live out his days as a recluse. His reaction upon hearing false news about Ardelisa’s death emphasizes his sentimental masculinity: “here he crossed his arms, a death-like paleness overspread his face, and he fainted” (135). This decidedly un-masculine display suggests his traits have become ambiguous as he demonstrates the weak constitution purported to be more ‘natural’ to women. He is only revived when a priest is able to convince him that Ardelisa is not actually dead, but is testing his constancy as a way to be sure he still loves her.

Ardelisa, on the other hand, takes charge of actively freeing herself from Turkish captivity. Once captured by Osmin, she is taken to his palace where she is treated well, but she is haunted by his pledge to make her his wife. Deciding to escape no matter what the consequences, she questions the morality of saving her virtue with Osmin’s blood, and then resolves “to do it, tho I perish” (66). Ardelisa, Violetta and Ardelisa’s maid escape after they set fire to Osmin’s house, and once they are safe, she announces: “we have left the place we were confined [to] in flames,” and asserts that Osmin and his household “will conclude us burned, and that will prevent all reports of our escaping” (86-7). Ardelisa is confident that they have escaped danger, and her willingness to do what she can to escape her inevitable rape highlights the ways in which ideas of female weakness could be countered.

By fighting as hard as she can to keep herself from being raped by Osmin, Ardelisa preserves her virtue.<sup>7</sup> Aubin makes it clear that it is Ardelisa who has caused all this to happen, specifically stating that the “seraglio” was “fired by Ardelisa,” who then created chaos by running through the house yelling “Fire! Fire!” (67). Though Longueville fails to perform his role as hero, Ardelisa rescues herself and others, and in the process she challenges the ideology that women need male protection because they are unable to protect themselves. Because the masculine imperative to keep women safe has been violated so many times, this scene mirrors others that highlight powers of female self-reliance.

Joe Snader has argued that Aubin’s “transformation of the captivity plot enables not only a vision of moderate female assertion but also a critical departure from the aggressive individualism of the captive hero, especially in her depiction of male captives as weak, passive, or at least pacific” (*Caught Between Worlds* 130). Snader suggests that Aubin’s heroines enact only “moderate” assertion, but I argue that Aubin’s and Haywood’s texts make a greater impact than he anticipates. The erasure of the characteristic male rescue in these texts creates a new kind of female traveler: one who proves herself able to handle the terrors of overseas travel better than the weak, passive male counterparts with whom she travels. This gives us another glimpse into Aubin’s and Haywood’s critiques not only of eighteenth-century beliefs about female vulnerability and weakness, but also of eighteenth-century masculinity.

Teresa and Emilia (of Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves*) free themselves from captivity at the hands of Selim and Barbarosa. Though they are – and ought to be – terrified of the men, they

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<sup>7</sup> Of course, as Garthine Walker has argued, fighting back against a potential rapist “could at once make a woman less womanly,” a fact that would put the woman in what Walker describes as an “untenable” position: “Would such a woman make a credible witness? Was she really so chaste? The question raised by the spectre of female violence appears to have made it difficult for women to give weight to testimonies in which they depicted their own success in resisting rape” (9).

also find Barbarosa attractive: we are told he is a man of “excellent shape and stature, his mein great and majestic” and that his “turban glittered with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds” (45). The narrator finally sums up Barbarosa’s appearance by telling us “in fine, he was not much above thirty and was one of the most beautiful and accomplished men of his nation” (45). Though Aubin’s and Haywood’s male characters often risk their lives to possess such beauty, Teresa and Emilia resist his charms and Aubin’s narrator editorializes here that women should be “more admired in resisting the passionate solicitations of such a man” than the men who easily give into their own lust for the exotic woman no matter what the consequences (45). Unlike their male counterparts, and, in fact, some of the men who they encountered in Europe, the women control their passions and manage to escape from both men.

Soon after their introduction to Barbarosa, Selim comes into Teresa’s room in an attempt to woo her. She refuses, and tells him that she is “with child by a noble husband” and then promptly faints. Once she revives, Selim promises that he will “merit [her] esteem, by all a lover can perform” (47). He leaves her, but Teresa soon hears “a dismal groan” from Emilia’s room, and seconds later Emilia enters “with a look that spoke the terrors of her mind, and the strange deed her hands had done. She had Selim’s habit on,” having donned the costume after stabbing him. On their way back through Emilia’s chamber, Teresa sees Selim “lying on the bed, weltering in his blood” (48-9). Like Ardelisa, Emilia’s violence against Selim prevents the sexual assault of both women. During this time, their suitors, who have also been taken captive, are sent to the governor’s summer home, where they are “bound hand and foot” and then “chained to the floor by the leg” (44). Rendered physically immobile, they cannot compel themselves to attempt to escape in order to rescue their wives. Teresa and Emilia have no other choice but to

rely on themselves, and Aubin equips them to do so without the need for male help, and with qualities clearly exhibited in contrast to those of their husbands and other men in these texts.

This pattern repeats itself in the later *Charlotta du Pont* when Angelina is kidnapped and held in a harem. Her father, after he hears that she has been captured, “well knew it was in vain for him to attempt further search for her, and therefore retired to a little seat in the country” (140). Once he gets there, he gives himself up “to contemplating, and [living] the life of a man that had quitted the world” (140). Left to her own devices, Angelina comes up with a plan to save herself and Catherina, a “Venetian woman who proved to have some command” over the other women in the harem (114). She tells Catherina to “contrive some strange disguise to cover us,” vows to stab the guard outside their room, and orchestrates their successful escape (144). That Aubin repeats this narrative pattern is key: the men in these tales are either not capable of rescuing women in danger, or even worse, simply fail to try. The ability of these heroines to free themselves from captivity time and time again, without the assistance of male counterparts, gives them significant control over their own lives. In contrast to the historical reality that, as Matar has argued, the only “dubious hope for returning to their [the female captives] country lay with their husbands or kinsmen” (*Britain and Barbary* 97), Aubin’s heroines clearly act on their own, able, when free of the strictures of European society, to rescue themselves instead of relying on husbands and kinsmen who passively accept captivity.

In cases where it is men, not women, who are held captive, they fail even to save themselves and have to rely on women to come to their rescue. In *The Noble Slaves*, Don Lopez and Hauteville have to rely on the kindness of Elenora, the Venetian mistress of the governor, for help. She falls in love with Don Lopez, and tells him and Hauteville: “though I risk my life

to do it, charming strangers, I will free you” (55). Elenora comes to them in the night “loaden with jewels, gold and clothes” (55), the pair quickly file their fetters off using the tools she provides, and escape with her to rendezvous with her servant who waits, equipped with horses, in a nearby town. Without Elenora to provide every necessity for their escape and survival, Don Lopez and Hauteville would be condemned to spend the rest of their lives chained to the floor of a Turkish prison.

The same holds true for Haywood’s Montrano and the Christian eunuch featured in *Philidore and Placentia*. Montrano, as we know, is castrated in a fit of rage by Elphania, whom he describes variously as a “monster of her sex” and a “cruel and revengeful woman...restrained by no principles of honour, religion, or generosity” (68). Perhaps Montrano is blinded by the horror of his castration, but Haywood’s narrator makes clear that without her, he would also be condemned to slavery. We’re told that “either repenting what she had done, or that it were true as she said, that she had given orders only to threaten, not to really inflict such a misfortune,” Elphania is led to try to help Montrano (69). In order to “make whatever reparation was in her power, [she] gave him his liberty, and a large sum of money, that he might transport himself” home. (75). Montrano is powerless to save himself and “in spite of the just hatred [he] had conceived against her, the circumstances he was in made him accept of her favors” (75-6). As angry as he might (justifiably) be, Haywood makes it clear that without Elphania’s help, Montrano would never be able to return home to Iseria.

Even the Christian eunuch, though he too has suffered much as a result of his lust, cannot escape captivity without the help of a woman. Arrested on the way to meet Arithea, the daughter of the bashaw who owns him, the eunuch is castrated for his betrayal in attempting to



sleep with her. Though she does so with her own life at stake, Arithea sees to it that he is freed from captivity in the middle of the night. She writes to him that “because it must certainly be an addition to your misfortunes to continue in the place where they befell you and where everything but serves to remind you of them and render your disgrace still flagrant,” she includes with her letter “the means of quitting Persia forever” (207). Though he is reluctant to try to return home in his state, he misses the chance to practice his Christian faith and takes her gift.

That Aubin and Haywood set their novels in Turkey is important: the cultural and social reversals that life in Turkey involved – the “freedoms” that women like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lady Elizabeth Craven believed that women in the Ottoman empire had – is reflected in the agency that Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines find outside of Europe. The social order that Islam produced becomes the perfect test arena for Aubin’s and Haywood’s calls for greater public access and safety for women at home.

#### Disappearing Reappearing National Identity

Even more curious are the moments when we see that women who have ‘gone native’ – that is, supposedly eschewed their family, faith, and national allegiance – retain their own set of values based on their identities prior to captivity. Violetta, the woman Ardelisa and her maid find living in Osmin’s palace, notes that although she believes Osmin “loves her” and she thinks of him as her husband, she still maintains her allegiance to the Christian faith. “I have had one son by him” she tells Ardelisa, “which I secretly baptized and which it pleased God to take to himself,” thus eliminating the threat that she would bring a mixed-race child into England (74-

5). Regardless of her current situation, it is clear that Violetta still considers herself a Christian, and still wants to maintain some connections to her faith.

When Elenora enters the chamber where Don Lopez and Hauteville are being held in Aubin's *The Noble Slaves*, we see that though she is dressed in "Turkish dress" and has been living with the governor, she still recognizes and puts value in the markers of the Venetian class system that she sees in the captives. She wonders if the governor "can...see such noble persons as you appear to be, perish in chains and not relent?" (56) By clearly identifying the men as noble, Elenora shows that she has not forgotten her own nobility and the class signs that mark the men as being 'worthy' of saving.

Isabinda, who has been kidnapped by her house slave and forced to live on a deserted island in *Charlotta du Pont*, clearly still feels allegiance to her Englishness: we're told she wears a "gown and petticoat [that] was made of a fine silk" and that her home is kept with items commonly found in an English home, like quilts and "coverlits" (89). She also keeps staples like flour, bread, and linens. Even Elphania, the woman responsible for Montrano's castration in Haywood's *The Fruitless Enquiry*, maintains her cultural and national allegiances despite her massive wealth and high social status. Anna, her maid, tells Montrano that Elphania was "divided" about whether or not she should help him, but that she feels "obliged to ease [his] suffering" because "it is the natural instinct which prompts us to have a pity for those of our own country" (64). Even this woman, described as a "monster of her sex" with no principles of generosity, demonstrates that she has the ability to recognize Montrano for a countryman and to value their mutual citizenship, a sign that she still understands and admires the qualities he represents.

Considering these descriptions alongside those of the renegade Spaniard who is “wicked as hell” and allows himself to be used by the governor “for his beastly pleasure” in *The Noble Slaves* and the European Bashaw in *Charlotta du Pont* who buys his greatness “here by renouncing his faith” (180), we can see that Aubin and Haywood contrast their male and female captives with a specific message in mind. European men described in terms language of violence and cultural betrayal, while the women – even those forced to commit serious violent acts normally considered beyond them – are held in high esteem. In fact, when Violetta admits that she is ashamed she did not do more to help herself, a Catholic priest tells her that, contrary to the unmarried Ardelisa’s violent acts to protect her virtue, “it was no sin in you to yield to him [Osmin], and it would have been willful murder to have killed him or conspired his death: nay a sin not to have been faithful to his bed” (*Vinevil* 92). That Violetta questions whether or not she was right not to resist Osmin demonstrates the ambiguous morality that came with female violence, even against an attacker set on rape. Though she has admitted to loving Osmin, Violetta and the other women in sexual relationships with Ottoman men return to Europe without facing the same condemnation that women who were victims of rape or otherwise exhibited promiscuous sexuality faced at home. Violetta and the other women are free to rejoin European society. Ardelisa, too, is held to be blameless for setting Osmin’s house on fire even though she is responsible for killing several servants who may themselves have been European captives. Nor are these women, as Garthine Walker argues they would be at home, figured as “less womanly” for their resistance. The figure of the European women, held to be blameless for her actions in the Ottoman empire (no matter what they might be) is illustrated most clearly in *The Noble Slaves*. After Emilia stabs Selim, she claims that “no guilt does

wound” her conscience for killing him. Charlotta du Pont claims that she is “inspired by her good Angel” to take a “sharp bodkin out of her hair” and stab the pirate captain who tries to rape her (47). That these women face no blame for their violence in resisting rape suggests that Aubin and Haywood are calling for a rethinking of the way women are viewed as helpless creatures, and a re-conception of female violence as an ultimately acceptable form of self-defense. Not only do these women face no blame at home because they killed resisting the attempts of an attacker, the priest absolves them of the charge of “willful murder.”

Claire Norton has argued that “renegades were worse than natural Moors because renegades had actively chosen to abandon their English Protestant loyalties and thus constituted a more direct threat to the English identity and collective sense of self and superiority” (267). Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines, however, resist the temptation to turn Turk, and seek to adhere to European behavioral conventions whenever they can. These women play an integral role in Aubin’s and Haywood’s construction of femininity: rather than succumbing to the gratuitous violence said to be a characteristic of absolute monarchies, women act only to save themselves, and in doing so, they actively neutralize the threat that they might ‘go native.’ Men, Aubin and Haywood argue, are at serious risk for sexual danger and cultural transgressions (like the ones displayed by the renegade Spaniard) which makes the Ottoman empire and the Barbary Coast dangerous to them. Women, however, are equipped to deal with the threats of transculturation much more easily.

#### Money and Marriage: Reestablishing Citizenship

Though Nabil Matar has argued that “having been ransomed, captives were finding themselves not only in debt to their ransomers, but destitute as a result of having to start their

lives anew after years of absence from their professions and their country” (*Britain and Barbary*, 103), this is not the case for the female captives studied here. These heroines return from their captivity, ready to live live happily ever after with their newly restored male lovers. Many of the heroines who escape captivity manage, at the same time, to amass enough wealth that they can return home without the economic concerns Matar documents. Lucinda and Charles are able to escape their captivity at the hands of an English press gang because they can use “the gold which Sabina the fair amorous Turk” has given to Lucinda upon her escape to outfit themselves in rich clothes (*Lucinda* 140). When *The Noble Slaves*’s Emilia and Teresa escape from Selim, they do so disguised in his clothing. The jewels that they find wrapped up in his clothes serve as a symbolic opening of the door to women to enter as agents into the male-dominated world of mercantile trading, rather than simply being one more object for circulation within it. When they change out of these outfits, Emilia removes her turban and vest only to find the “rich jewels it [her turban] was adorned with” (51). She also discovers that the buttons of her vest are made of diamonds and that there are “100 sultanas of gold” in the pocket (51). The women rejoice in this discovery, partly because it will “procure them means to escape,” but also because they will return to their own country laden with gold and jewels (51). *Charlotta du Pont*’s Angelina gathers the same sort of wealth when she escapes with Catherina, who brings along her jewels and other valuables when Angelina orchestrates their escape (146). Angelina is able to add to this wealth when, during the escape, she finds “two rich vests, two turbans, two pair of Turkish boots, and a box, whose rich outside and weight, tho small, made her believe it worth carrying away” (146). Later, they discover that their costumes are made from “cloth of gold” with ruby and emerald buttons and that their turbans are full of “diamonds, pearl and other

jewels: so that they had an immense treasure” (148). Snader has observed that “female captives gain wealth from their Oriental masters through such accidents; several heroines obtain hordes of jewels from the luxurious costumes their masters has forced them to wear” (*Caught Between Worlds* 155). Though in these cases, the women are not ‘forced’ to wear these costumes, he is correct in the sense that women in the East manage to accumulate a great deal of wealth as a result of their captivity. Even Placentia’s short captivity is beneficial, when, following her rescue by Philidore, it is revealed that the Christian eunuch is her brother. Grateful for his rescue and his sister’s safety, he promptly bestows on her the fortune that she needs to marry Philidore. In contrast to this, Colley’s documentation of the financial state of returning male captives is stark: she notes that they often required “charitable handouts” (78), a contention that aligns with Matar’s comments that captives returning to Britain were often in financial dire straits.

In terms of the ways in which Aubin and Haywood seek to rewrite appropriate femininity as an ideal in which women of the upper-middle-classes can be active participants in their own lives, including in systems of economic exchange, the wealth that the women discover in Turkey is important in two ways. Firstly, that the wealth they gain comes from clothing indicates another important reversal life in the East offers the English woman. Joseph Addison argued in 1710 that the “looms of Persia” were causing young ladies to “be struck with every Thing that makes a Show, however trifling and superficial” (487). The seductive powers that cloth from the East had over women, Addison argues, was akin to the first thoughts of love, writing that “Mrs. Margery Bickerstaff” his “Great Aunt” was routinely distracted by her family from losing her fortune through marriage. He writes that “in any Time of Danger” when she appeared to be falling in love with a man, the family would “throw a new Gown or Petticoat in

her Way” to distract her (488). Here, it is clothing that not only prevents seduction by allowing women to disguise themselves in order to escape, but clothing that grants them access to markets of commerce and exchange in order to gain wealth, rather than, in Addison’s words, being “ruin’d by the Tapping of a Snuff-Box” (487).

That the women gain wealth as a result of a situation in which their virtue has been in peril is key to the agency women are granted as a result of life in the East. Here, instead of rape being “seen as primarily a crime against (another man’s) property” and “a form of theft,” the sexual assault that women face in these texts is a crime against their own bodies (that is, the only form of tangible property they could not lose) and the women are accorded financial restitution for the threats to their person (Durstun 169).<sup>10</sup> Rather than kidnapping or sexual assault being construed here as a crime against a male protector, or as a crime against England, it is firmly accorded status for what it is: a crime against women themselves.

After their escape, both Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines return to Europe and, because of their wealth and their love for their male companions, settle down into a life more or less consistent with middling-class domestic values. The ambiguous ending to these texts – wherein a heroine, who has rescued herself from captivity, settles down to a domestic life – seems problematic at first glance. But this move, I argue, is necessary to Aubin’s and Haywood’s plan to formulate a new way of viewing the early eighteenth-century woman. These texts exist as part of a larger movement that align Aubin and Haywood with a notion of femininity that contradicts ideas about the need to restrict the circulation of women for their safety, both

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<sup>10</sup> Though Durstun contends that payment for the theft of a daughter’s virtue was a phenomenon found largely in the “medieval period,” he offers two convincing examples that this attitude carried on into the early eighteenth century: that of Colonel Charteris, who tried to keep Anne Bond from filing charges against him by “offering her money, fine clothes, the chance to live in a house and promising to find her a husband in due course.” He also cites Fielding’s 1730 *Rape upon Rape*, where Squeezum “assumes a monetary payment will settle a rape allegation” (1.173, 2.22).

physical and moral. Domesticity is still, even for Aubin and Haywood, the only ‘real’ option for the upper-middle-class woman, but both authors seem to offer the idea that a different kind of woman – one with agency and subjectivity and economic goals – can still be a domestic woman.

Ros Ballaster has argued that “Haywood experiments with the idea of gender reversal – whereby Philidore learns to adopt the position of women, deferring and repressing desire in order to secure a relation of equality” and contends that this leads to a “union of equality” (139). Snader suggests:

as the self-preservation of Aubin’s heroines involved transgression of gender roles in male disguise, a choice of active self-defense over passivity, and even participation in a limited colonial economy, the circumstances of Oriental slavery provided English readers with an imaginative liberation from the period’s increasing domestic guidelines for female behavior. (*Oriental Captivity Narrative* 149-50)

The freedom granted by this “imaginative liberation” allows the women in Aubin’s and Haywood’s texts to gain more agency in conducting their own marriages. The relationships that are established at the end of these texts feature one clear difference from those we have come to expect in the study of marriage in the eighteenth century: they are formed entirely because women want them to exist, and in many cases it is women who orchestrate the unions at the end of these texts. Instead of simply having the power to refuse, Aubin and Haywood give their heroines the power to establish how and when marriages will take place, and whether or not to remain loyal to their spouses or send them away.



In Aubin's *Count de Vinevil*, both Violetta and Ardelisa enter into what we've come to see as "typical" eighteenth-century marriages, but instead of being passive agents with only the ability to refuse marriage proposals, both women undertake to make their marriages legitimate at moments when questions arise about their validity or propriety. Violetta's experience is perhaps the most surprising, and at the same time, the most telling. Admitting that she loves Osmin and thinks of him as her husband, Violetta refuses to marry Captain La Feuillade, owner of the ship on which she travels to Europe. Though La Feuillade presses her over and over again to become his wife, Violetta follows the advice of the priest, who tells her that "whilst he [Osmin] is living, you ought not to marry" (92). When the news reaches her that Osmin has died at the hands of the governor, she insists on going into a proper period of mourning for her deceased husband, rather than immediately entering a hasty second marriage. She tells La Feuillade "if he would consent to let her retire for six months into a convent" to grieve for Osmin, she will marry him (137). It is possible to see in the interactions between Violetta and La Feuillade as a sort of transposition of expected gender conventions. It is the obviously sexually experienced Violetta who finally gives into the pleas of the passive La Feuillade, demonstrating that it is she who holds control over the fate of the marriage.

Ardelisa, in her interactions with Longueville, also establishes a domestic household, but like Violetta, it is Ardelisa who claims the authority to either continue or end her relationship. In a series of schemes most closely associated with male figures of Restoration drama, Ardelisa enacts a set of plans to test Longueville's constancy. She tricks Longueville (in a play that mirrors the kind of manoeuvre we expect from a husband in a Restoration comedy, eager to prove he has not been cuckolded) into confessing his love for her. By agreeing to live

with him as his wife, regardless of the fact that he has failed to act in an appropriately masculine way in the face of her disappearance, she restores his position as her husband, allowing him to reclaim his masculine authority as such, but we cannot forget that this marriage is reestablished because Ardelisa chooses for it to be. After returning to Venice and retiring to the monastery, Longueville declares that he will bid farewell to the “world” and to “sensual joys,” essentially confirming his refusal of a masculine sexual desire (136). With the help of the priest, Ardelisa finds him loyal, and the pair are reunited. Key to this moment is that their reunion is conducted in Ardelisa’s chamber, where she is found in a “state of undress” (136). Immediately following Longueville’s entrance into the room, “the servants all withdrew, and now God had rewarded their long sufferings, by making them happy in one another” (136-7). After this, Ardelisa and Longueville and Violetta and La Feuillade “lived in perpetual felicity” (136-7). Without Violetta’s conviction that her “marriage” to Osmin be respected and mourned properly, and Ardelisa’s return to Longueville, the pattern of domestic normalcy that marks the group’s re-acclimatization to European values would be incompatible.

In *The Noble Slaves*, women restore men to positions of masculine authority from their positions of passivity. Teresa, after being reunited with Don Lopez (who, as we remember, has been kept chained to the ground during her captivity, and is only freed by the charity of a woman) is kidnapped again by his nephew. Though Teresa attempts to save herself by throwing a glass of wine in Don Fernando’s face, she falls down the stairs and breaks her leg during her attempt to escape. Fortunately, she is rescued after she feverishly mumbles about Don Lopez, Emilia, and Hauteville to the doctor charged with caring for her. When Don Lopez and the others find out about her captivity, they burst into the house and, with this

development, gone is the shell of a man who was rescued by a woman. We're told that Don Lopez "stayed not a moment to deliberate, but shot him [Don Fernando] through the head: he fell dead at his feet not uttering one word" (200). By finally rescuing Teresa from a male captor, Don Lopez's masculinity is re-established and he and Teresa can live happily ever after. His power and authority are restored by the fact that Teresa will have to rely on his help because she is left with a limp. That their marriage is resolved with a sense of co-operation and partnership is key to Aubin's conception of marriage as an establishment of equality.

Clarinda, heroine of an inset story in *The Noble Slaves* involving her lover Malherb, performs necessary work to help Malherb regain and recapture his lost masculinity. Separated by the widow who buys them once they are taken captive, Clarinda meets an Irishman who helps her escape from captivity, while the widow keeps Malherb as her love slave.<sup>11</sup> Malherb tells us that "I lived two whole years in perpetual torment, and anxiety of mind; my health decayed and I was no longer the same man" (47). Fortunately, he is eventually reunited with Clarinda upon the widow's death. The pair returns to Europe, where Malherb can re-establish his normative masculinity by immediately impregnating her. His virility, lost when he is enslaved and used only as a sexual object, is restored by the willingness of Clarinda to continue their relationship. By doing this, Clarinda serves as an example for men whose female loves have been caught in similar situations. She recognizes that Malherb resisted the threat of sexual assault as long as he could, but she sees the attack against him for what it is: violence, not seduction. Time and time again, then, the women in Aubin's texts willingly, and sometimes

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<sup>11</sup> This, of course, makes it clear that the threat women face – being held captive as a sex slave – is not, in fact, unique to women.

deliberately, surrender their lives of travel and adventure for marriage, but readers cannot escape the fact that these marriages only exist because women orchestrate them.

The same is true, and perhaps even more obvious, in Haywood's texts. Because Montrano is castrated in the process of his captivity, we would expect that it would become quite difficult to re-establish some kind of normative domesticity when he returns to Iseria. But, in fact, his altered state is much easier for Iseria to reconcile with her need for domestic normativity than we might expect. We're told that, once he returns to Europe, Iseria quickly finds out about his castration and though Montrano tells her that she should "think not I come to claim thee as a wife, to curse thy youth and beauty with the shadow of a husband" Iseria finds a way to compromise. She tells him that her affection has "not in the least abated by the knowledge of the injury that had been done to him" (84-4) and Iseria encourages Montrano to live with her so they can "pass [their] days in a mutual endeavor to oblige each other, and our nights in such endearments as a chaste brother might allow himself with a sister he tenderly loved" (84-5). It is her decision, and her willingness to overlook the sexual violence perpetrated against him, that allows for the re-establishment of some form of domestic life for them. Like Clarinda, then, Iseria forms a model for male acceptance of women following acts of sexual violence. Though they do not resume a sexual relationship, it is only by Iseria's will that the 'marriage' continues. Iseria bestows some sense of masculine authority upon Montrano by calling him her 'brother,' a move that negates at least some of his literal emasculation. The establishment of a domestic union, usually founded only at the desire of men, becomes something women not only instigate, but maintain by their own desires.

## Spinners of Myths, Tellers of Tales: Aubin and Haywood as Oriental Narrators

Khalid Bekkaoui has noted that many of Aubin's texts "echo the structural framework of the *Arabian Nights*" and I contend that Aubin and Haywood purposely use the structural familiarity and thematic constructions of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* for their own purposes. By locating their narratives in the East, Aubin and Haywood align *themselves* with Scheherazade, the female narrator of Galland's immensely popular *Arabian Night's Entertainments*. Felicity Nussbaum and Saree Makdisi have argued that "European writers embraced the new world opened up by the *Nights* with unreserved enthusiasm" (iv) and my final contention is that that Haywood and Aubin use this new world, thought to be vice-ridden by Britons, to posit a new and different conception of femininity. Both texts feature the same kind of inset narratives for which Galland's text is famous, and both serve to attempt to convince the reader (or in Scheherazade's case, her listener) to alter their opinions not only of women, but also of the masculine sexual violence represented in the Sultan's plan to seduce virgins and then execute them.

In "Feminism Now and Then," Nussbaum describes Scheherazade as a "heroic woman" and "fictional character deriving from the Eastern traditions of magic and mystery rather than the Western one of reasoned discourse" (84). By setting their tales in the mysterious Orient, both Aubin and Haywood give primacy to ideas of "magic" and "mystery" that work in opposition to the "reasoned discourse" that places women in subjected positions and gives European men sexual control over women. By allowing their heroines to escape in what seem like a series of implausible, randomly generated coincidences, Aubin and Haywood draw

attention to the “mystery” of coincidence and divine providence, and suggest that a slightly less “rational” discourse might prove beneficial to English society.

Nussbaum also suggests that “through the wily tales she [Scheherazade] told each night just before dawn, she not only convinced the sultan to stop his coldblooded violence against women, but, in winning his heart and mind, she saved the state” (84). Aubin and Haywood engage in the same kind of fantasized society-altering acts. Both draw serious attention to the “coldblooded violence” of the European male who kidnaps and rapes the European woman at will and without mercy, but they also put forth a potentially “state-saving discourse” in positioning women as being able – and even uniquely able – to circulate in male realms not only safely, but profitably. The need, these texts argue, to keep women confined to the home is potentially much more dangerous to conceptions of British national identity, religious conversion, masculinity, and female purity than the “reasoned” discourse of eighteenth-century social theorists allowed. Finally, Nussbaum argues that “many of the captivating fables [Scheherezade] recounted obliquely criticized the sultan’s appalling behavior, thus exposing his misjudgements about women” (84). The same kind of critique exists in Aubin’s and Haywood’s texts as well: European men in these texts behave appallingly, either through their criminal abduction and rape of women, or through their complete failure to adhere to their own conceptions of masculinity that call the European man to protect women from the dangers posed to them both at home and overseas.

Amanda Kenny has argued that “Scheherazade’s subversive power over the sultan offers a counterpoint to the image of the ‘passive oriental other’” (42), but my contention is that both Aubin and Haywood also tap into ideas of subversive narratives by couching their texts in

properly-domesticated marriage plot endings and talk of a divine providence. Ros Ballaster argues, “the *Arabian Nights* allows the metamorphosis of the Orient into the Occident; Antoine Galland turns the seraglio into a French salon in which *previeuse* women orchestrate and regulate polite speech” (12) and both Aubin and Haywood enact the same kind of conversion: by putting themselves into a position of fantasy occupied by Scheherazade, Aubin and Haywood highlight the positive attributes associated with the harem, including female freedom from isolation. By engaging with the world of public authorship, Aubin and Haywood, like Scheherazade, take private female storytelling public, and argue for a new view of women beyond being merely objects of exchange. Aubin and Haywood publicly call their male readers to consider that, in their treatment of women, the “other” is rather closer to home than most think.

## Chapter 2: 'A Pox on Thee': Lady Mary and Inoculation

*In which the public confounds dress and transculturation, politics and smallpox, and leaves our heroine to suffer in infamy*

When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu left England and sailed with her husband and her young son to Constantinople, no one – not her family, her friends, nor the fellow travelers who sailed before her – could have predicted the effect that her journey would have on the eighteenth-century world in which she lived. It does seem, however, that the family of at least one of Lady Mary's correspondents, Sarah Chiswell, worried about the effects that the journey might have on the safety of the young Lady Mary (I.251). Writing to Chiswell from Nijmegen (or 'Nimeguen'), Montagu displays her own confidence in the safety of her journey by telling Chiswell that she is sorry that "your fears of disoblighing your relations and their fears for your health and safety has hinder'd me the happyness of your company, and you the pleasure of a diverting journey" (I.251). Beyond concerns for her health in undertaking such a long journey in the depths of winter, Chiswell's family was likely concerned about any number of dangers that could meet the young women. In a letter written from Vienna and dated January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1717, Montagu tells Alexander Pope, "I am threaten'd at the same time with being froze to death, bury'd in the Snow, and taken by the Tartars who ravage that part of Hungary I am to passe" (I.297).

There is no doubt that the journey Montagu took was dangerous, but contemporary critics have also suggested that her journey represented an opportunity for Montagu to experiment with her own cultural and social identity. Though these critics perform a necessary evaluation of Montagu's interactions with Turkish society, when we read the work that became known as the *Turkish Embassy Letters* as a whole, we see Montagu actively attempting to dispel



any accusations that she fantasized about abandoning her English life in order to join a harem and live the life of an aristocratic Turkish woman. Instead, Montagu demonstrates that she recognizes some of the benefits of harem life, but she does not participate in any kind of transculturation, even though she would be under suspicion of ‘turning Turk’ upon her return home. Though these accusations would damage her character from the moment her letters were read in England, this chapter argues that, in light of Montagu’s stated preferences for English life in her *Letters*, accusations of transculturation are unfounded. With this in mind, I argue that the criticism Montagu faces in reviews of her work, in public when she engages with the inoculation debate, and in her own family’s attempts to argue that she either did not write the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, or that she fabricated the letters documenting her entrance into the harem, is a reaction not to Montagu herself, but to the perceived threats that harem life posed to British society and politics.

Beyond just the rumored sexual excesses of the Ottoman harem, Montagu’s support for Turkish women – including her adamant approval of, and support for, the smallpox variolation that Turkish women practiced – and her ability to influence the (largely female) members of the English aristocracy to have the practice performed on their children, suggests that the real threat Montagu posed was in her support for the customs of the harem and, most especially, in her clear support for customs that allowed harem women greater access to political, social and public health debates.

This chapter proceeds in two directions: the first part argues against interpretations of Montagu as a transculturated woman, and challenges previous critical assumptions that Montagu’s *Letters* represent signs that she had ‘gone native.’ The second part suggests why it

was that, considering this evidence, Montagu was so vilified by her critics, and why her family was so concerned with denying her authorship of the *Letters* and her entrance into the harem. In a sense, this chapter denies Montagu was transgressive at the same time that it asserts that she was, but ultimately contends that if Montagu is ‘guilty’ of a ‘crime,’ it is that she interfered in male business when she brought inoculation into popular use in England, and was perceived to support greater freedom for female intervention in public life.

### The *Letters*, and Travel

The publication history of Montagu’s letters is well known: Isobel Grundy explains that “for this travel ‘book’” Montagu carefully “selected from among the accounts she had written, and picked a small handful from among her actual correspondence...as recipients of reconstituted letters which were meant to be read as literature” (*Comet* 119). On her final return to England before she died, Montagu “presented the albums to a sympathetic clergyman” living in Rotterdam, with an inscription that they be “dispos’d of as he [thought] proper” (Halsband, *Montagu as Letter-Writer* 49). Cynthia Lowenthal confirms both Halsband and Grundy’s assertion that the *Letters* were always intended by Montagu to be published after her death, but the manner of their entrance into print was less than ideal. She writes that Montagu’s letters “were published in May 1763 without the family’s permission and from an imperfect manuscript copy” but that, even with all the “inaccuracies” in the manuscript (said to have been copied overnight by two travelers who borrowed Montagu’s version from the clergyman) the travel collection “elicited an overwhelmingly positive response,” with regard to Montagu’s “literary skills” (82). I argue, however, that Montagu’s support for inoculation,

which translated into support for independent female intervention into public health debates, is one element of this work that opened both her and her letters up to criticism.

On their publication, the *Turkish Embassy Letters* joined a long tradition of travel writing by English citizens who ventured abroad to document foreign cultures. Though travel narratives may seem to be a fairly uncomplicated genre – the simple reporting of facts as the traveler sees them – Steven Clark is clear that the reading of a travel narrative represents a complex relationship between writer and reader. “In travel writing,” he notes, “there is a transfer of information to an experiential witnessing: what has been absorbed from research or, more cynically, from guidebooks, has to be absorbed into the structures of anecdote, narratives of self-comprehension, and parables of rectified ignorance” (14). Curiously, rather than being absorbed into discourse about Turkey in the eighteenth century, Montagu’s *Letters* are set apart from other texts by her involvement in the inoculation debate and by theories advanced by numerous critics, including Lady Elizabeth Craven, and even Montagu’s own daughter, that she did not write *The Letters* at all. Clark also highlights another complicating factor in travel narratives in his text, one that will become a component of discussions about Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s work: “by its [the travel narrative’s] very nature...that to which it refers cannot be verified, hence the ready and habitual equation of traveler and liar” (1). Like all travel narratives, Montagu’s text faced charges of inaccuracy, but Montagu’s critics came to believe that she purposely hid the truth about her sexual and cultural exploits while in Turkey, and used their own works to criticize her for what amounted to their own imaginative interpretations of her work and her motives.

Originally published in 1763 under the typically long title *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M<sup>rs</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Montagu written during her travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c. in Different Parts of Europe : Which Contain, Among Other Curious Relations, Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks: Drawn from Sources that have been Inaccessible to Other Travelers*, Montagu's letters placed her in a small group of travelers to the Orient who published travel memoirs. That Montagu's title contains the claim that the *Letters* contained information from "sources that have been inaccessible to other travelers" is a gesture toward the ways in which the *Turkish Embassy Letters* posit knowledge gained by female travelers as not only important, but ultimately – like the harem itself – closed to men. Fellow English citizens William Biddulph, (*The Travels of Certain Englishmen* (1609)), Sir Henry Blount (*A Voyage into the Levant* (1636)), and Aaron Hill, (*A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman empire* (1709)) traveled to the Ottoman empire and wrote about their experiences, as did French travelers Jean de Thevenot (*Relation d'un Voyage fait au Levant* (1665)) and Jean Dumont (*Voyages en France, en Italie, en Allemagne, a Malte, et en Turquie* (1699)). Billie Melman notes that before Montagu's letters appeared, however, "there is no secular tradition of female travel...and there is no model of a female narrative outside the chronicle of the pilgrimage" (10). Melman goes on to suggest that "what little evidence we do have about women's travel to the eastern Mediterranean before 1717 suggests that it is exclusively religious. This modern 'secular' discourse erupted after more than fifteen centuries of silence" (10). Montagu's text is rife with scenes in which she articulates her position in relation to other travel writers who have come before her. In a letter to her sister, Lady Mar, dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717, Montagu directly challenges the popularity and accuracy of

existing texts, writing, “perhaps it would be more entertaining to add a few surprising customs of my own Invention, but nothing seems to me so agreeable as the truth” (I.330). In a letter to Lady -----, dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1717, Montagu mocks her correspondent for erroneously believing that reports made by Jean Dumont are true. She writes: “your whole Letter is full of mistakes from one end t’other. I see you have taken your Ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont, who has written with equal ignorance and confidence” (I.368). In this letter, Montagu continues to criticize her forbears, noting that “’tis a particular pleasure to me here to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from Truth and so full of Absurditys I am very well diverted with them” (I.368). She criticizes these other travelers for lying about their accounts of women (whom they likely did not see) and their descriptions of mosques “which they dare not peep into” (I.368). This letter also highlights Montagu’s obsession with class, and her insistence – seen in the title of her letters – that she can offer a version of the ‘real’ Turkey because she is the first aristocratic woman to travel there. She explains that “Turks are very proud,” and wonders how the “Ordinary Fellows” like Hill and Dumont gather their information, considering that Turkish men “will not converse with a Stranger they are not assur’d is considerable in his own Country” (I.368). Clearly, her letters are intended to reframe Turkish life and customs for her readers, promising to offer them a view of Turkey they previously could not access. In a letter to Lady Bristol dated on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1718, Montagu writes that she should give Bristol a “right Notion of [Pera], Since I know You have none but what is Partial and mistaken from the writings of Travelers. ’Tis certain there are many people that pass years here in Pera without having ever seen it, and yet they all pretend to

describe it” (I.397). Montagu’s *Letters*, then, claim to offer up a different idea of the Ottoman empire than her audience might have expected.

Melman’s work offers an astute contextualization of Montagu’s letters in a historical frame that highlights her place in the world of travel writers. She argues that the mere fact of Montagu’s journey, and the letters that emerged from it as a coherent travel narrative, subvert the dominant ideology of the male travel writer. She claims that “the very experience of travel [by women] *ipso facto* subverts gender ideology and the ethos of domesticity. Writing a travelogue involves a redefinition of the feminine space and the sphere of action” (17). Melman concludes by declaring that Montagu’s work is a “key text, the corner-stone in the new, alternative discourse that developed in the West on the Middle East” (17). Just by writing letters that contradict what has become established, male-discovered knowledge of Turkey, Montagu becomes a woman who publicly exhibits tropes in opposition to notions of appropriate female behavior.

Unlike many of the texts studied in this dissertation, Montagu’s *Letters* have been the subject of significant critical analysis in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Elizabeth Fernea examines Montagu’s adoption of an ethnographic personality in the *Letters*. Cynthia Lowenthal argues that her unprecedented access to the Turkish aristocracy clouds Montagu’s vision of ‘real’ Turks (89), while other critics explore the ways in which Montagu’s choice of the letter form is the perfect form to make a public statement couched as a private one (Heckendorn Cook 3). This chapter examines the ways in which Montagu uses the letter form to posit not only unconventional ideas about Turkey, and especially about Turkish women, but also to put forth a public campaign for inoculation and female intervention in public health

debates. Lowenthal notes that “Lady Mary’s status as an aristocratic woman” prevented her entrance into a literary marketplace that was – in some sense at least – open to her lower-class literary precursors like Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley. Lowenthal’s contention that “Lady Mary alternates between actor and spectator as she creates an authority in authorship without being charged with a too visible display of herself in an unsanctioned area” (4) ignores the backlash Montagu faced surrounding her involvement in the inoculation debate. If Montagu’s status prevents her from entering into the literary marketplace, it was the very thing that gave her something to say: her aristocratic status gave her access not only to the world of aristocratic feminine agency in Turkey but also to the women who routinely performed inoculations in that country. Up until Montagu’s choice to publicly challenge England’s physicians on smallpox inoculation in 1721, the only Western person who had publicly testified to witnessing this process was Dr. Emanuel Timonius (most widely known as Timoni), in a report hidden from view from most in the *Annals of the College of Physicians*. It was eventually published more widely in *The Weekly Journal, or The British Gazetteer* in 1721, around the same time that Montagu began to speak publicly about the benefits of inoculation. Both Montagu’s and Timoni’s works were limited to a select audience, but the so-called feminine letter form gave Montagu a public entrance into a debate that was restricted to her by both her class and gender.

The general scope of criticism around Montagu’s *Letters* focuses on an anachronistic reading of them based on Edward Said’s thesis of Orientalism (Lew, 1991; Lowe, 1991; Yegenoglu, 1998) that erroneously applies a late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century theory to a document written largely in the early eighteenth century. As the previous chapter has argued (and as Montagu’s *Letters* reflect), ideas about the East in the early eighteenth

century were more heterogeneous than Said's thesis accounts for. Critical focus also engages with Montagu's use of the genre of travel writing in particular (Aravamudan, 1995; Secor, 1999; Dubino 2006) along with her treatment of Turkish women and her sporting of Turkish dress on her travels (Aravamudan, 1995; Kietzman, 1998; Heffernan, 2002; Konuk, 2005).

#### Dress and Lady Mary's "Perpetual Masquerade"

Key to this argument is an analysis of the ways in which Montagu's two most thoroughly-studied letters have been misinterpreted and misread in order to support a thesis that inaccurately interprets Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* as the manifestation of a desire to 'go native' or transculturate to the life of an aristocratic Turkish woman. These two letters, both written from Adrianople and dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717 have often been removed from the context of the *Letters* as a whole and studied in isolation, as if in an attempt to construct a meaning for them independently of the *Letters* as a complete work. By doing this, critics of *The Turkish Embassy Letters* have come to see Montagu's time in Turkey as somehow sexually and culturally transgressive, an interpretation which can lead to a misreading of both Montagu and her work.

Much of the critical work done on Montagu's letter to Lady -----, in which the bath scene is featured, focuses on Montagu's interaction with the naked Turkish women using the bath on the day of her visit. Felicity Nussbaum argues that Montagu's letter from the bagnio in which she declares that it is "so hot with steams of sulphur proceeding from the baths joyning to it, twas impossible to stay there with one's Cloths on" (I.313) exhibits lust for the naked women she sees. Montagu's lingering observations on the "stark naked" bodies of the women, and her proclamation that "there were many amongst them as exactly proportion'd as ever any



Goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guido or Titian” (I.314) leads Nussbaum to muse in *Torrid Zones* about Montagu’s sexual orientation.

Though Nussbaum argues that it would be “inaccurate to say that these and other hints of Lady Mary’s Sapphic desires mean that she possessed a lesbian *identity* in the modern sense” she does note that, “the allegations of promiscuity lodged against her relate to her unwillingness to be restricted privately or publicly to traditional heterosexual activities” (141). Though I am unconvinced about the strength of Montagu’s “sapphic desires,” there is much evidence, including Montagu’s entrance into the public inoculation debate without a thought toward her reputation, to suggest that she was, in fact, promiscuous when it came to her desires to experience life, regardless of the sphere to which she was confined.

Elizabeth Bohls reads this letter in terms of its aesthetic value, and without convincing evidence that Montagu felt desire for other women, Bohls suggests that Montagu uses the bath scene to counter the reports of other travelers who “unanimously present Turkish women as wanton or hypersexual” (31). I follow Bohls in her notion that “Montagu’s aesthetic comparisons should have the effect of de-eroticizing her readers’ imaginary gaze and thus blocking the crass fantasies of Withers’s and Dumont’s lascivious crew” (31), but I think there is more here than simply a de-eroticization of supposedly wanton female sexuality. Anna Secor joins Bohls in suggesting that in writing this letter, Montagu seeks to represent the ‘truth’ of Turkey as she sees it, in contrast to earlier reports by men who were largely ignorant about what women’s lives in Turkey were like. Beyond this, however, it is worth pointing out that Montagu consistently reports on what the women she meets look like, and that her descriptions of the female body are not limited to naked Turkish women. Writing to Lady Mar from

Rotterdam in August, 1716, Montagu notes that “the common Servants and little shop Women here are more nicely clean than most of our Ladys, and the great variety of neat dresses (every Woman dressing her Head after her own Fashion) is an additional pleasure in seeing the Town” (I.249). Her Letter to Lady Rich, dated December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1716, and sent from Hanover declares that Montagu is “now in the Region of Beauty” where all the women display “litterally rosy cheeks, snowy Foreheads and bosoms, jet Eyebrows, and scarlet lips, to which they generally add Coal black Hair. These perfections never leave them till the hour of their Death” (I. 288). Though the irony in Montagu’s tone here is clear, there is nothing remarkable about the fact that she would record the bath scene for posterity just as she had recorded the appearance and fashion choices of other women, and the assumption that the nakedness of the Turkish women automatically renders them erotic might be a misreading. Her later letter featuring her comments on the women of North Africa as “differ[ing] so little from their own country people, the Baboons, tis hard to fancy them a distinct race, and I could not help thinking there had been some ancient alliances between them” signals Montagu’s continuing fascination with representing women’s lives, traditions and fashion (or lack thereof) to her readers (I.427). Montagu’s overt racism here is somewhat surprising considering the tolerance with which she describes Turkish women, but as I noted in chapter one, Roxann Wheeler and others argue that nakedness was, in the eighteenth century, a key marker of degeneration.

As if anticipating that her entrance into these private spaces would cause a stir at home, Montagu turns ethnographer, using her knowledge of the bath scene to criticize those men who have imagined what life in female-only spaces like the bath and the harem were like. At the same time, Montagu offers an early illustration of what becomes clear in her intervention in the

inoculation debate and the scandal that followed: as a woman, she has access to information that men do not have and uses this claim to knowledge to argue for female travel as an important tool for the English to use in their search for knowledge of other cultures.

Much critical attention has also been given to Montagu's dress and the letter in which she describes her Turkish costume, dated April 1<sup>st</sup> 1717 and addressed to Lady Mar. In this particular letter, two curious issues arise that warrant critical attention, but readers of Montagu's letters must be cautious not to take both her dress and her discussion of the veil out of context. In writing to Lady Mar, Montagu declares that she will:

try to awaken your gratitude [for the letter, in the hope of receiving news from her sister] by giving you a full and true relation of the Novelty of this Place, none of which would surprise you more than a sight of my person as I am now in my Turkish Habit. (I.326)

Part of this dress includes the oft-referred to veil that Turkish women wear in public. Montagu writes that because "no woman of rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without 2 muslins, one that covers her face all but her Eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head and hangs halfe way down her back" the Turkish women are free to circulate in public and do as they wish. According to Montagu:

there is no distinguishing the great Lady from her Slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous of Husband to know his Wife when he meets her, and no Man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street. (I.328)

Montagu continues, noting, "this perpetual masquerade gives them entire Liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of discovery" (I.328).

Montagu's determination that the Turkish women "have more Liberty" than English women because of this veil and these social customs has aroused significant critical interest. Madeline Dobie has written that the veil serves as an important sign of Islamic alterity, associating the Turkish woman with mystery at its most fundamental level. The veiled woman cannot be understood because she cannot even be identified as anything other than a figure of overwhelming difference (52). This difference, of course, is what makes women in the Islamic world such an object of fascination, and it is likely in the use of the veil that we find a further explanation for Montagu's letter from the bath, demonstrating that, in reality, once the veils are removed, there is nothing about the dress of Turkish women that sets them apart from European women, and, in fact, proscriptions about the dress European women are allowed to wear marks *them* as a mystery to others, too.

Lisa Lowe places great meaning in Montagu's dress, arguing that her statements that Turkish women are "freer" than English women "directly contradicts anti-female discourse that is...present in...travel-writing" (44). She also suggests that, by using the term 'masquerade,' Montagu attempts to assimilate Turkish dress to "carnavalesque practices that overturned traditional social structures" (44). As Terry Castle has convincingly argued, however, these moments of masquerade in English culture are still heavily controlled and contained (27). Part of my argument here draws focus away from the heavy critical emphasis on Montagu's dress and the implication that her clothing, and her controversial statements about the freedom Turkish women have, signals her desire to transculturate. For Montagu, the veil serves practical, rather than symbolic, purposes. She tells Abbe Conti in May 1717 that she:

had the Curiosity to go to see the Exchange in my Turkish dress, which is disguise sufficient, yet I own I was not very easy when I saw it crowded with Janizarys, but they dare not be rude to a Woman, and made way for me with as much respect as if I had been in my own figure. (I.354)

Montagu clearly sees the veil as a way for women to circulate in public without worrying about her reputation suffering as a result, or risking a man being “rude” to her. Though at this moment she is traveling incognito and without an Ambassadorial retinue, the men clear the way for her simply because she is a woman. So, while Montagu seems impressed that women can conduct affairs while veiled, it is clear that she recognizes that veiling offers a tremendous amount of freedom to women when it comes to circulating in public, and she admires Turkish women for their ability to do what she cannot do at home.

In a process that Aravamudan calls “levantinization,” and Kader Konuk refers to as “ethnomasquerade,” critics have commented on how Montagu’s Turkish dress signals a transformation into a transculturated woman. Both scholars, in an act that John Rodenbeck terms “utterly ignorant,” overlook the fact that “several Ottoman Sultans specifically forbade their subjects – including millions of European ones – to dress like ‘Franks’ [ie: Europeans] either at home or abroad,” including during 1717 when Montagu visited (67). According to Rodenbeck, this act that has garnered so much attention is one in which Montagu “actually had no choice” (68). Suggestions, then, that her donning of Turkish dress meant something more than her adherence to local custom and served some sort of transformative purpose do not hold up to historical fact. Indeed, Montagu communicates that she sees her costume as part of a routine in a letter to her sister, writing that “I am now in *my* Turkish habit,” as an indication

that both she and Lady Mar must have expected her to have to assume this dress (I.326), and Montagu may have even had parts of it made for her before she left England.

### Dressing the Text: Montagu's So-Called Transgressions

Though Montagu's Turkish dress has merited much critical discussion, her letters, combined with Rodenbeck's arguments about sumptuary laws in the Ottoman empire, force a reconsideration of the meaning of her dress, and a similar reconsideration of the critical importance placed on clothing in this context. There is no doubt that dress – including women wearing the dress of many different cultures – was a contentious issue in the eighteenth century. Castle, Catherine Craft-Fairchild, Jennie Batchelor, Dror Wahrman and others have discussed the important role that dress played in establishing identity in the eighteenth century and there is much evidence (including the letters I have already cited) that Montagu was sensitive to the English fascination with clothing. My suggestion, however, is that when she records these details about the costumes she encounters during her travels, she is doing nothing more than reflecting current interest, and attempting to provide her (largely female) correspondents with information of interest to them. Because Montagu's dress grants her significant access to places she would likely be prevented from entering – including the harem – it is unlikely that she viewed it as anything more than convenient to her ethnographic goals.

An aristocrat and a supporter of sumptuary laws, Montagu would have implicitly known of the complications posed by dress and disguise. Though her letter about Turkish costume is fascinating, we need to be cautious of reading more into it than evidence supports. Jennie Batchelor writes that “the language of clothes is often arbitrary, its meanings vulnerable to manipulation and misinterpretation” (9). She also notes what seems clear in discussions of

Montagu's dress: that dress is "dependent on a variety of complex, content-specific circumstances – from the wearer's gender, social status, and environment to the moral predilections of the observer – the meanings of dress can never be controlled completely" (9). In fact, many of Montagu's letters about clothing do more to reflect her interest in class status than they do dress, and there is little to suggest that Montagu interpreted donning this outfit as a sign of her cultural conversion. She confirms her association of class and dress in a letter to Lady Bristol, written August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1716, from Nuremburg. This letter contains her first thoughts about the city:

they have sumptuary Laws in this Town which distinguish their Rank by their dress and prevents that Excesse which ruins so many other Citys, and has a more agreeable Effect to the Eye of a Stranger than our fashions. I think after the ArchBishop of Cambray having declar'd for them, I need not be asham'd to own that I wish these Laws were in force in other parts of the World. (I.255)

Montagu's support for sumptuary laws is primarily a support for proper displays of rank and class, and bigotry that the lack of sumptuary regulations were driving men and women of England into debt (though it is likely that she worried just as much about middle class men and women being able to forge aristocratic appearances). In either case, key to her support for sumptuary laws was her own desire to have her social status recognized.

Beyond her desire to maintain class standing, Montagu is well aware of her duties as an ambassadress. Her note about wearing Viennese court dress signals that she considered that adopting the dress of foreign courts a part of her role as Wortley's wife. In a letter dated September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1716, to Lady Mar, Montagu recounts her "first going to Court" in Vienna

(I.265). She writes that she was “squeez’d up in a Gown and adorn’d with a Gorget and the other implements thereunto belonging: a dresse very inconvenient, but which certainly shews the neck and shape to great advantage” (I.265). Though she calls the fashions in Vienna “more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason than ’tis possible for you to imagine” she recognizes that she is joining in the customs of a foreign court, and knows that her readers will find these details interesting. She tells Lady Mar that she “cannot forbear in this place giving you some description of the Fashions here” (I.265). Montagu then proceeds to describe the various elements of the dress, including a “Bourle, which is exactly of the same shape and kind, but about 4 times as big, as those rolls our prudent milk maids make use of to fix their Pails upon” (I.265). Other elements of the dress include a hairstyle that makes the ladies heads “too large to go into a moderate Tub” and “prodigiously powder’d to conceal the mixture [of real and false hair], and set out with 3 or 4 rows of Bodkins, wonderfully large, that stick 2 or 3 inches from their Hair, made of Diamonds, Pearls, red, green and yellow stones” (I.265). Finally, Montagu concludes that “their whalebone petticoats out-do ours by several yards circumference and cover some Acres of Ground. You may easily suppose how much this extraordinary Dresse sets off and improves [their] natural Uglynness” (I.265). Montagu dons this dress in preparation to pay a court visit to the “lovely Empresse her selfe” and notes that the Empress is “oblig’d to comply in some degree with these absurd Fashions, which they would not quit for all the world” (I.265).

Montagu’s donning of the dress of the Viennese court here is interesting: she puts on what she considers to be a ridiculous outfit because it is not only social convention, but also in both the Viennese court and the Ottoman empire, she has no choice. The letter she later writes



to Lady Mar on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717 closely echoes this one. Montagu attempts to give her sister a description of an outfit she finds fascinating and documents her Turkish costume in the same tone and manner as she documented the Viennese court dress. She writes about the “antery” which she describes as a “waistcoat made close to the shape, of white and Gold Damask, with very long sleeves falling back and fring’d with deep Gold fringe, and should have Diamond or pearl Buttons” (I.326). Like her description of the Viennese women, Montagu similarly finds problems with the way that Turkish women prepare themselves to receive or entertain company. She tells her sister that “they dye their Nails rose colour; I own I cannot enough accustom my selfe to this fashion to find any Beauty in it” (I.327). The parallel scenes in which Montagu writes at length about her dress serve a purpose beyond simply relating interesting tidbits she knows her correspondents want to hear, or recording her sumptuary choices for posterity. By commenting on the elaborate costumes both Viennese and Turkish women sport, Montagu calls attention to rules of conduct and social practice that often require women to engage in hours of preparation before emerging into company (another possible reason why she enjoys the anonymity of the veil so much). Though Montagu liked Turkish dress more than she liked Viennese costume, she adopts it because it is the custom of the place she is visiting and her donning of even the most ridiculous of costumes is a sign that she believes in her duties as an ambassadress. That she was attempting to disguise herself or throw off the markers of her Englishness seems ludicrous in light of what she writes to the Abbi Conti about a visit to the mosque of the Sultan Selim: “I was dress’d in my Turkish habit and admitted without Scruple, tho I believe they guess’d who I was...” (I.358). No matter how elaborate or rich her costume,

even the janissaries recognize her as an Englishwoman, which calls into question assumptions that she used her clothing to mask or eliminate her Englishness.

According to Onur Inal, there is nothing atypical about Montagu's assumption of Viennese or Turkish dress. Inal writes that "there was continuous cross-cultural exchange of fashion between Ottoman and British women, beginning with the first encounter in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and continuing on an increasing scale in the following decades" (245). Montagu's Turkish dress, something Aravamudan and Konuk believe represents a form of cultural transgression, actually signifies that Montagu was behaving like many other women of her class, and like an ambassadress. Inal raises some intriguing ideas in his analysis, one of which provides some insight into issues of identity that seem to follow the traveling woman on her journey. Dress, Inal argues, became a symbol of "cross-cultural exchange" and blurred the "physical markers between 'us' and 'them'" that Said argues symbolizes the relationship between the East and the West. "A new generation of historians," Inal argues:

contest the conventional view that the borders between the Ottoman empire and its European neighbors indicated the mobility and connectivity of Ottoman borderlands and reject the once dominant view that Ottoman and European societies were two separate entities with limited intercourse. (245)

Inal's thesis suggests, then, that though Montagu's taking on of Turkish dress makes for an interesting letter, the critical assumption that at the moment she dons this outfit Montagu begins to assume the identity of a Turkish woman, or begins to challenge her own identity as an aristocratic English woman, is exaggerated.

Indeed, there are moments in Montagu's text that, despite contentions that she experienced some kind of "radically decentring experience that effected a productive loss and subsequent reconstitution" (Kietzman 537) of her English, aristocratic identity, where she frequently reminds her readers of her Englishness during the course of her travels. In a letter dated April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1717, Montagu remarks that she is a "good judge of their [the Turks] Eating" because, during her stay with Achmet Bey in Belgrade, he threw "very magnificent dinners dressed by his own Cooks, which the first week pleas'd me extremely, but I own I then begun to grow weary of it and desir'd my own Cook might add a dish or two after our manner" (I.348). Like most travelers, Montagu eventually yearns for the comforts of home. She busies herself in customary Western aristocratic pursuits like collecting antiquities from other countries, especially ancient Greece and Rome. She obtains "Greek Medals," a "Porphyry Head finely cut of the true Greek Sculpture" and even tells Pope that she has "bespoke a Mummy" for her collection (I.364). In a letter to him dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1717 she tells him that she has begun to grow tired of Turkish entertainment and yearns for "Smoak and Impertienicies" of London, regardless of the fact that she finds that her days pass in a "more agreeable Variety" in Turkey (I.366).

In a scene I find the most reflective of Montagu's recognition that she is still, above all, an aristocratic English woman, she tries to use the 'Balm of Meccha' to improve her complexion. In a letter to Lady -----, dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1717, Montagu relates that she applied this balm to her face because she has heard of its "universal Applause" amongst "all the Ladys of [her] acquaintance at London and Vienna" and hopes for "some wonderfull Effect to [her] advantage" (I.368-9). Unfortunately, the only effect the balm has on Montagu is to cause her

face to “swell...to a very extraordinary size” and turn red. Her face “remain’d in this lamentable state 3 days, during which you may be sure I pass’d my time very ill” (I.369). Though she says that “if one was to form an opinion of this Balm from their [Turkish women’s] faces, one should think very well of it” she decides to “let [her] Complexion take its natural course and decay in its own due time” (I.369). This scene is telling in terms of Montagu’s supposed adoption of Turkish customs during her time in the Levant. Though critics like Konuk, Aravamudan, and Kietzman have argued that she assumes the persona and customs of a Turkish woman, she is, quite simply, physically allergic to doing so. Counter to its intended effects, the balm does not give her the “loveliest bloom in the world” but rather transforms her into a hideous, swollen, red-faced version of herself (perhaps a version that reminded her of her earlier battle with smallpox). Montagu’s skin, the actual physical barrier between her body and the outside world, rejects the application of female Turkish custom and along with it, a female Turkish persona. She even challenges Lady -----’s desire to use it, telling her that she cannot “in Conscience advise you to make use of it” because, as an Englishwoman, her body will no doubt reject this Turkish custom too (I.369). As Tassie Gwilliam has argued, “cosmetics on women’s face exemplify the pervasive anxiety about female surfaces, but because cosmetics have such a volatile, transferable presence, they also become available as the site for other anxieties, other concerns” (144). In this case, the balm becomes an undeniable witness to Montagu’s continued English allegiances.

There are other moments when Montagu makes it clear that she does not admire aristocratic Turkish customs enough to wish herself part of Turkish society. In the letter dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1717 addressed to Lady -----, Montagu criticizes Turkish women for “pretend[ing]

to the knowledge of secrets that by way of Enchantment gives them the Entire Empire over whom they please” (I.369). She recounts an argument she had with a lady who “really talks very sensibly on any other Subject” but who becomes “downright angry” with Montagu when she “perceive[s] she [has not] perswaded me of the Truth of 40 storys she told me of this kind” (I.369). Montagu goes on to assert her allegiance to English customs when she declares that she “assur’d her [the woman] that in England, where we were entirely ignorant of all Magic,” men and women still engage in the kind of secret affairs that Turkish women claim require spells to pursue.<sup>12</sup> This lady herself then acknowledges Montagu’s difference in a bizarre incident where Montagu recounts that the woman “staring in my face, said (with a very learned air) that no Enchantments would have their Effect upon me, and that there were Some people exempt from their power, but very few” (I.370). Montagu is quick to declare that “all the Women here are of the Same Opinion” but that they are not ‘enchanters’ because, in an attempt to re-write other travel journals that accuse Turkish women of witchcraft, declares: “they don’t pretend to any Commerce with the Devil” (I.370). Montagu’s actions here betray her own certainty of the ridiculousness of some of the customs of Turkish women. In the process, however, she continues her attempts to distance them from accusations that they are infidels who have access to Satan’s spells.

In a letter to Anne Thistlewayte, dated January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1718, Montagu again dispels any notions that she has become “half a Turk” by recounting the details of her pregnancy. She acknowledges being influenced by Turkish women who believe that “’tis more despicable to be marry’d and not fruitfull, than ’tis with us to be fruitfull before Marriage” by becoming

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<sup>12</sup> This, of course, calls into question ideas that the veil made it easy for women to conduct illicit affairs. If these happened so frequently, why would women need to resort to spells?

pregnant (I.371). She writes that Turkish women do not “content themselves with using the natural means, but fly to all sort of Quackerys to avoid the Scandall of being past Child bearing and often kill themselves by ’em” (I.372). She then offers a subtle critique of Turkish motherhood, noting that the women do not have to worry about raising the “12 or 13” children they could have in “10 years” because “the Plague will certainly kill half of ’em; which, indeed, generally happens without much concern to the Parents, who are Satisfy’d with the Vanity of having brought forth so plentifully” (I.372). In what has become a characteristic move by this point in her letters, Montagu notes that she is forced, as with her dress, to mirror the actions of the others in order to be accepted into society. She tells Thistlewayte that “the French Ambassadors is forc’d to comply with this fashion as well as my Self. She has not been here much above a year and has Lain in Once and is big again” (I.372). That both she and the French ambadress are “forced” to become pregnant as a kind of duty to fit in negates the threat that Montagu might be willingly mimicking Turkish behavior. Montagu’s comic raillery at the fashion of pregnancy here is intriguing. Not only does she write that both she and the French ambadress become pregnant to be fashionable, she draws attention to the lengths that women often go to in order to be thought fashionable, and the severe demands that ‘duty’ often placed on women. The ‘fashion’ of pregnancy was an issue at home as well, and Montagu would have been no stranger to the ways in which women manufactured the appearance of gestation. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi has documented the use of the “six-month pad” by women in England, partly to protect themselves from the threat of sexual violence, and partly to fit in with fashion. She writes that “big bellies, the focus of male eroticism in earlier centuries, had ceased

to fascinate European men” (59), and cites Anne Hollander who dates this change to the late seventeenth century (98). Like Montagu’s support for veiling, to pad the belly even when it was no longer considered attractive to men suggests, according to Gelpi, that “women were using fashion (in part) to signal their sense of possessing their own fecund bodies” (59). Turkish women, according to Montagu, believed that pregnancy was a superior state of being, and seemingly pressured each other to be pregnant all the time. Curiously, however, even these real, legitimate pregnancies gave Turkish women freedom that English women could only get by faking theirs. Montagu tells us that Turkish women are exempt “from the Curse entail’d on the Sex. They see all Company the day of their Delivery and at the fortnight’s end return Visits, set out in their Jewells and new Cloths” (I.372). Montagu declares, however, that she will “continue an English woman in that Affair [a long lying-in] as well as I do in my dread of fire and Plague” (I.373). Unlike the Turkish women, Montagu refuses to flaunt her pregnancy or the rules of aristocratic motherhood. She keeps to English aristocratic customs here too.

#### The Turkish Court and its Viennese Relations

Montagu’s letters from Turkey have often been thought of as revealing a kind of life that was completely different from that imagined in more familiar parts of Europe. Montagu, however, clearly intends her experiences in Turkey to be aligned with some of the similar social and cultural customs she witnesses on her travels. Facing the long history of travel documents about Turkey that offer a conception of the harem as a space of illicit sexual relations between women and of the licentious sexuality of the sultanate, Montagu questions the accuracy of these accounts. She writes to Anne Thistlewayte that she will “perhaps be surpriz’d at an Account so different from what you have been entertain’d with by the common Voyage-writers who are

very fond of speaking of what they don't know" (I.343). She highlights her own access to places previous travelers have been forbidden from entering, declaring that "it must be under a very particular character or on some Extraordinary Occasion when a Christian is admitted into the House of a Man of Quality, and their Harams are allways forbidden Ground" (I.343). She reveals that male travelers "can only speak of the outside, which makes no great Appearance; and the Women's Apartments are all built backward, remov'd from sight" (I.343). In order to dissuade anyone from thinking that the men who describe the harem might have accidentally viewed it through the window, Montagu notes that these apartments "have no other prospect than the Gardens, which are enclos'd with very high Walls" (I.343). The message here is clear: no Western men have ever been allowed in the harem, and none have even been able to so much as catch a glimpse through the window.

In a letter to Lady Mar, dated April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1717, Montagu recounts being "invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's Lady" (I.347). She comments on the woman's slaves, her manners, and that she is entertained with "all kind of civility" including dancing, guitar-playing slaves (I.348). Curiously, this scene mimics Montagu's visit to the Empress of Vienna. She has a "private audience" with the Empress, just as she has with the Vizier's lady, and she is entertained with great hospitality by both women. Even more interesting still is the space in which both of these incidents take place: Montagu visits the Grand Vizier's Lady in the harem, a space where men are prohibited from entering; she meets the Empress in a "drawing room" where "no man enters but the old Grand Master, who comes in to advertise the Empress of the Approach of the Emperor" (I.266). Though Turkish women are criticized for possible immoral behavior in their strictly female space, Montagu makes it clear that the existence of a private, female space



where women are protected from the sexual advances of men (the 'old Grand Master' seems unlikely to be a sexual predator) is not a purely Turkish phenomenon.

Montagu twice more compares the women of Turkey to the women of Vienna in order to combat the idea that Turkish women behave in ways that European women do not. She writes that veiled Turkish women are able to "follow their inclinations without danger of Discovery" because they wear the veil (I.328). The women of Vienna, she reports to Lady Rich in a letter dated September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1716, "have 2 Husbands, one that bears the Name and another that performs the Dutys, and these engagements are so well known, that it would be a down right affront and publicly resented" if a host were to invite a "Woman of Quality to dinner without at the same time inviting her 2 attendants of Lover and Husband" (I.271).

Along with comparing the harem to an aristocratic Viennese drawing room and the habits of Turkish women with those of aristocratic Viennese women, Montagu compares the space of the harem to the grates of the convent. Though the English forbade convents in their own country, Montagu demonstrates that they were certainly an object of curiosity to visitors abroad (she writes that she has been "several times" to the convent in Vienna) and declares to Lady X----- that she is "best pleas'd" with the "Ease and neatness they seem to live with" (I.276). The convent is posited as a completely legitimate tourist attraction for women (the nuns "receive all visits of Women"), and, by relating the story of "the only beautifull young Woman I have seen at Vienna," Montagu tries to suggest that women being confined to their own spaces is not an idea that is exclusively Turkish. That Montagu's discussion of female confinement to convents is contrasted with her story about the "Christian Woman of Quality" who preferred to be married to the Turkish man who captured and then later raped her than be

sent to a convent in dishonor by her family calls into question whether the English are actually upset at the wrong group. Life in a harem, Montagu demonstrates with the story of the Christian woman, restores female honor, whereas life in a convent draws continual attention to the loss of it.

By making these connections between the familiarities of European life and the mysteries of Turkey, Montagu explains to her reader that ‘becoming halfe a Turk’ is hardly the threat that it is made out to be. Even in moments where Montagu seems to be aligning herself with Turkish women, she takes steps to distance herself from this possibility. Her admiration of the Sultana Fatima, rather than suggesting an improper sexual attraction for a foreign woman, is framed as an admiration for the woman’s European looks. Montagu’s interactions with Fatima are different from those that she has with Hafise, the first Sultana she meets in Turkey. She declares that Hafise is “what one would naturally expect to find in a Turkish Lady” but Fatima has “all the politeness and good breeding of a court, with an air that inspires at once Respect and tenderness” (I.386). Montagu even goes as far as to suggest that Fatima could “be suddenly transported upon the most polite Throne of Europe” and “nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a Queen...to say all in a Word, our most celebrated English Beautys would vanish near her” (I. 350). In a moment that diffuses the possibility that Montagu is showing a sexual attraction to the foreign beauty, Montagu’s Greek slave observes that “this is no Turkish Lady; she is certainly some Christian” (I.386). Though Montagu is embarrassed, Fatima reveals that her mother was a Polish captive, and that her father “us’d to rally me, saying he beleiv’d his Christian Wife had found some Christian Gallant, for I had not

the Air of a Turkish Girl” (I.386). Montagu’s overt admiration for Fatima turns out to be an appreciation of the woman’s European qualities, and her European beauty.

In a final moment that demonstrates that Montagu cannot be imagining herself as assuming a Turkish identity, she addresses the issue of Turkish slavery. She writes to Lady Bristol, “You’ll expect I should say something particular of that of the Slaves, and you will Imagine me half a Turk when I don’t speak of it with the same horror other Christians have done before me, but I cannot forbear applauding the Humanity of the Turks to those Creatures” (I.401). Adam Beach argues that “Montagu often simplifies and misinterprets many aspects of Turkish slave institutions, especially those that involve the use of elite slaves” (295). Montagu’s comments on slavery, especially her belief that the Turks practice a particular “humanity” to their slaves, is problematic. Beach is correct that Montagu does not “comprehend the fact that Sultana Hafise was herself once a slave concubine to Mustafa II” or that Fatima is the product of Turkish captivity (305). Montagu’s failure to acknowledge Turkish slavery in these texts is, indeed, “repressing the violence and the indignity involved when human chattel are offered for sale, inspected like livestock, and purchased in an open market” (305). Montagu’s lack of outrage, however, is probably due to the fact that, as an aristocratic woman, she was likely never in a location in which she would have encountered the more horrifying aspects of Turkish slavery.

If Montagu’s life in Turkey is significantly less transgressive in terms of her relationship with, and to, Turkish female life than earlier scholars have suggested, to what do we ascribe the multiple moments when, following her death, Montagu is erased both from authorship of her letters and from the harem altogether? The answer, I argue, lies not in any sexual or cultural

transgressions on Montagu's part, but rather in the way that all female transgressions – even the intellectual ones that Montagu commits – are framed in the language of female licentiousness. In this case, Montagu's sin is an inappropriate, public display of her private domestic actions and correspondence with respect to the inoculation debate. Her engagement with this debate, however, does provide a moment in which female knowledge is given credence in public, and, in terms of how quickly others including the Royal family took up the practice after Lady Bute was inoculated, given primacy over the more 'academic' explorations of male scientists and doctors.

The Harem: a World of Ill Repute?

With the publication of travel narratives by Aaron Hill and the fictional *Arabian Nights Entertainments* supposedly compiled and translated from the original Arabic by Antoine Galland, the harem became a place that, because it was closed to men (who were the majority of travelers and explorers at the time), was shrouded in mystery and myth for the English public. Because of the harem's inaccessibility, the female space became synonymous with all that was incomprehensible and mysterious about the East. In his *Full and Just Account of the... Ottoman empire*, Aaron Hill claims to have entered a harem, and though he promises his readers to reveal the world that has been "kept a secret to the searching knowledge of our European travelers," as a man, his claims are likely false (qtd. in Ballaster 74). That Hill writes this entrance as a type of sexual conquest is unsurprising, and he suggests that in making it, he has pierced the virginal, unexplored flesh that "lay long unentered" (qtd. in Ballaster 74)). He vows to:

entertain [his reader] with a wonderful but pleasant and sincere account of new discoveries, which like the golden Indian world, lay long unentered, as appearing barr'd against our view with insurmountable impediments, but gained at last, will

spread throughout our Western regions, such surprising plenty of her valuable product, as may more than recompence the patient stay of your expecting curiosities. (qtd. in Ballaster 74)

That Hill reads his entrance into the seraglio as an entrance into the female space (and, by extension, the female body) is unsurprising to those familiar with imperial discourse. But his language here – alongside reports by Dumont and others – links those secrets with the spread of a kind of contagion making its way across Europe. That the space is first “barr’d against our view” and then penetrated (“gained at last”) by Hill suggests that he has been instrumental in the gaining of (carnal) knowledge of the most mysterious place in Turkish life. Further to this, Hill writes that this knowledge (both carnal and experiential), once released, is destined to spread through the West bringing with it the possibility that the licentious sexuality rumored to be part of harem life will spread to Europe and to England. My contention for the rest of this chapter is that the fears (or, perhaps in Hill’s case, delight) that harem knowledge will spread from the East to England are the same ones we see displayed in criticism of Montagu’s involvement in the inoculation debate.

Though Montagu’s letters were generally well received by those who read them both as she wrote them and in their published versions, Montagu would not be able to escape charges that she had somehow transgressed the boundaries of propriety. Isobel Grundy reports that Horace Walpole, for instance, liked the *Letters* but expected them to be something closer to a “personal history...something in the line of courtesan memoirs” (625). Despite Walpole’s hopes, the published letters contained no evidence of sexual impropriety or ‘courtesan-like’

behavior, but his use of the term suggests that Montagu was thought to be offering something of herself in public that she should have kept private.

Despite Walpole's doubts, The *Critical Review* of 1763 declared that *The Letters* were "bewitchingly entertaining" and promised that "the reader will find a more true and accurate account of the customs and manners of the several nations, with whom this lady conversed, than he can in any other author" (426). Walpole (in a more flattering moment) wrote that he found the letters "genuine" and "not unentertaining" (XXXVIII.202). Grundy reports that Montagu's son "wrote for them from Rosetta in Egypt" where he was studying at the time, and that "Voltaire reviewed them for the *Gazette Litteraire*, expanding the praise he had already distilled in a letter" (626).

Montagu's letters may have been all the rage, but the reception of them was not an all-encompassing victory. The *Monthly Review*, commenting on a letter in which Montagu writes that Achmet Bey's knowledge is more important to her than Newton's scientific discoveries (to the Abbe Conti, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1718), suggested that "our fair traveler has undoubtedly carried her respect for Eastern manners and Eastern pleasures too far, when the great, the glorious Newton is placed before a poor, uninformed voluptuary!" (65). The reviewer then justifies his reference to Bey as "poor," arguing that, "for what are all the possessions of the wealthiest effendi, or bashaw in the East compared with the treasures of Newton's mind!" (65). Here, it is Montagu's intervention into intellectual pursuits that causes an issue for the reviewer, and it is these interventions in scientific and medical debates, rather than any sexual impropriety, that leads to Montagu's vilification, and leads her family to draw a different set of links between Montagu and the harem. Criticism of Montagu is, I argue, the result of her entrance into the harem of

Sultan Achmet III, but rather than being critiqued because of any sexual transgression, it is her insistence that the knowledge that she learned there be brought home to England that causes so much difficulty for her.

Robert Halsband tells us that if Lady Bute (described by Billie Melman as Montagu's 'literary executioner' (see Melman, *Women's Orients* 79) had read Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, she would quickly have realized that "they did not contain the racy scandal and gossip of her mother's private letters and diary. Instead they showed Lady Mary as she wished to appear to the world, a brilliant and graceful *belle Espirt* on a tour through foreign lands" (288). Unfortunately, Lady Bute either did not read them, or, as Halsband, Fernea and Grundy argue, she felt that the act of writing the letters themselves was transgression enough that the content hardly mattered. Halsband argues, "Lady Bute's sense of propriety was offended. All the public acclaim (and the private praise she must have heard) did not alter her belief that it was unseemly for Lady Mary to be an author" (289). Though it is very likely that Lady Bute felt it was "unseemly" for Montagu to be an author, she notably did not destroy manuscript copies of Montagu's fiction or poetry. Instead, she focused on Montagu's letters and diaries, suggesting that there was much (and after Montagu left England, there probably was) that needed to be kept hidden. But her noted distaste for what became the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, and her attempts to keep them from being published at all, signals that she felt that they were an inappropriate testament to her mother's memory. Grundy suggests that, fearing scandal, Lady Bute even attempted to downplay the news of her mother's death and the press it might garner, suggesting that Bute felt that "absence of fuss was best, both for a lady of letters and for a Prime

Minister's mother-in-law, in a climate that mixed new female decorum with old appetite for scandal" (624).

Nowhere is this new interest in decorum as it relates to Montagu's travels easier to see than in Lady Elizabeth Craven's own letters written on her travels in Turkey, published in her 1789 *Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*. Much like Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, Craven's letters relate travel facts, meetings with strange cultures and peoples, and a refutation of the arguments of the travelers who came before her. In this case, however, it is Montagu's accounts that are being refuted. Craven writes: "I must observe that whoever wrote L.M---'s letters (for she never wrote a line of them) misrepresents things most terribly" (1.105). Katherine Turner has explained that the difference between Montagu's letters, which she terms "classical, tolerant, and largely ahistorical" and Craven's lies in an ideological shift in how foreign spaces were viewed and reported on by the traveler. By the time Craven traveled, the tolerance with which Montagu viewed the Turkish people had been replaced by the view that foreign spaces included a "population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (115).<sup>13</sup> Craven's removal of Montagu from the authorship of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* serves two purposes. Firstly, she, like Isabel Burton would do a century later, denies the possibility that the aristocratic Montagu ever felt a kinship with Turkish women. Craven's need to do this, however, serves to indicate that she saw something in the *Turkish Embassy Letters* that marked Montagu as transgressive and her letters as dangerous. This, I suggest, is Montagu's

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<sup>13</sup> Here we can see the beginnings of Said's definition of Orientalism in the 1785 works of Lady Elizabeth Craven.



intervention in academic debates about inoculation, and her flagrant refusal to stick to more domestic concerns in her *Letters*.

Montagu's letters, Craven argues, present such an unacceptable vision of femininity that Montagu, an aristocratic woman who should, it seems to Craven, have "known better," is removed from the text completely. According to Turner, the problem with Montagu's letters is their appreciation of Turkish culture, but I suggest that the problem is rather that they presented an idea of womanhood that was inappropriate even to Lady Craven.

Regardless of Craven's reasons (which also may be just as simple as her wanting to usurp Montagu's position as the primary female travel-writer on the Ottoman empire), it is far more interesting to consider the other issues that arise around Montagu's authorship and her credibility. Not surprisingly, Montagu's daughter Lady Bute corresponded on the subject of Montagu's authorship of the letters with Lady Craven, as Lady Louisa Stuart documents in her "Introductory Anecdotes" to Lord Wharncliffe's edition of Montagu's works and letters. Lady Stuart references a section in Craven's *Memoirs* where that woman notes that she had received a letter from Lady Bute:

she sent me a very polite message on hearing that I had said the cloven foot of the pedant was plainly to be perceived in the printed letters of her mother: that some things might be hers, but I was sure most of the letters were composed by men. Her ladyship having heard this remark, upon her introduction to me said that she had always had a high opinion of my sense, and what I had observed respecting her mother's letters confirmed it. (qtd. in Wharncliffe 84)

Curiously, both Lady Bute and Lady Craven did not simply attribute Montagu's writing to some other men, but rather to three men specifically: Horace Walpole, John Cleland (who would later publish a spurious 'extra' volume of Montagu's letters in 1767), and a third, unknown man. Stuart documents Craven's hunch, quoting directly from her *Memoirs* a second time: "She then told me that Mr. Walpole and two other wits, friends of his, joined in a trio to divert themselves at the expense of the credulity of the English public by composing those letters" (84). In a hint at how poorly these two women viewed the *Letters*, they believed Walpole, with whom Montagu had a long-running feud, and Cleland, some of whose works were highly pornographic, were responsible for the *Turkish Embassy Letters*. Regardless of who was to blame (Walpole's letters indicate that he thought the work authentic (XXXVIII.202)), both women were absolutely sure that Montagu had had nothing to do with the writing of the text that became known as the *Turkish Embassy Letters*.

But Lady Stuart's introduction offers us an erasure of Montagu's experience more enlightening than simply a refusal of female, aristocratic authorship. Wharnccliffe's edition of Montagu's text, published in 1837, is based on editorial work done by James Dallaway, who published an edition in 1805. Wharnccliffe's edition includes Dallaway's introduction supplemented by a few notes written by himself in an attempt to correct the information Dallaway included. Added to Dallaway's introduction is Lady Stuart's "Introductory Anecdotes" which, at times, engage directly both with Dallaway's comments and public criticism of Montagu. The conversation between Stuart and Dallaway, partly moderated by Wharnccliffe, revolves mostly around whether or not Montagu was ever inside the harem or not, and by

reading Dallaway's introduction, we can see that this matter became one for serious social debate among readers of the *Embassy Letters*.

Montagu's role in the history of travel writing is one of the first that Dallaway takes up in his text. He writes that: "it has been said that Lady Mary was the first English woman who had the curiosity and spirit to visit the Levant; but the Editor recollects seeing an account at Constantinople, that both Lady Paget and Lady Winchelsea were included in the suite of their Lords, during their several embassies" (5). Both Halsband and Grundy dispel this rumor (for which Dallaway provides no evidence), and Montagu's letter to the Princess of Wales strongly suggests that she believes herself to have been the first. In a letter dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717, Montagu writes to her royal correspondent: "I have now, Madam, past a journey that has not been undertaken by any Christian since the Time of the Greek Emperours" (I.310). Though Montagu is referring to her specific passage to Adrianople, it is clear that she believes that her travels are remarkable because she is the first woman to make them.

More curious than this, however, is the debate that arises in print between Dallaway, Wharncliffe, and Stuart about whether or not Montagu had ever visited a harem at all.

Dallaway begins by noting that:

many persons, on the surreptitious appearance of the letters of Lady Wortley Montagu, already published, were inclined to question their originality, or if that were allowed, the possibility of her acquiring the kind of information she has given respecting the interior of the Harem. (6)

Dallaway explains away this doubt by reminding his audience that "no one of the Turkish emperors was so willing to evade the injunctions of the Koran" as the Sultan who led the

country during Montagu's visit, Ahmed III (whom he refers to as "Achmed") (6). Dallaway goes to great lengths in this passage to critique Ahmed III's leadership skills, declaring that "he hazarded the love of his people by retiring to Adrianople, that he might more frequently and freely indulge himself in the habits of life adopted by other European nations" (6). That he would grant Montagu, the aristocratic wife of the English ambassador, entrance into the harem seems a distinct possibility for Dallaway and he notes that, even though as he writes in 1805, "access has been denied to the Seraglio at Constantinople, in the instance of the ambassador's ladies," this fact is no indication that the European-loving Ahmed III would not have granted Montagu access in 1717. The current affairs in Turkey, he argues, are "no proof that Lady Mary did not obtain an unrestrained admission, when the court was in retirement, and many ceremonies were consequently dispensed with" (6).

To this passage, Wharncliffe, writing more than 30 years after Dallaway, has affixed the following note, strongly suggesting that Montagu's family (Wharncliffe was Lady Mary's great-grandson) had something at stake in reporting that Montagu did not enter the hotly-contested space. He writes: "there is not the least reason to suppose that Lady Mary ever was admitted to the interior of the Harem, either at Constantinople or Adrianople, as Mr. Dallaway supposes" (6). Later, in her "Introductory Anecdotes" Montagu's granddaughter, Lady Louisa Stuart, comments on this issue at length:

it proved, as far as what we may call a negative can be proved, that the story, so generally prevalent, of Lady Mary's having had admittance into the Seraglio, was totally false and groundless. In those pages intended to meet no eye but her own — where as in the preceding volumes, every event was set down day by day, every day

accounted for, however briefly, every place she went to specified – not one word denoted, not a mysterious nor ambiguous expression left the least room to surmise, that she had ever set her foot within the walls of the Sultan’s palace, either at Adrianople or Constantinople; nay that she had ever sought to do it, or even thought of it as a thing practicable. (57)

Stuart’s criticism of Dallaway’s suppositions do not end here, however. Stuart goes on to write that Dallaway’s “prepossessions on the subject could make him fancy he saw, in the printed letters, which had lain so long under everybody’s eyes, what was not there” (58). Stuart contends of Montagu that, “respecting the *Royal* harem, she has given *no* information of *any* kind, excepting what she had obtained from the Sultana Hafise” (58). As if Lady Stuart had not made her opinions on this subject clear, she continues onto a third page, writing: “in none of her letters, save that where this visit [to Hafise] is described, does she so much as mention, or allude to, the interior of the seraglio” (59). Stuart then concludes that, even though, by 1799, the Ottoman empire was “curtailed, humbled, dejected, despoiled of whole provinces by Russia” and was “lying like a sick and fallen beast at the feet of England,” there still lies little possibility that Ahmed III would have capitulated to Montagu’s request for entrance (which, of course, came in 1717, rather than Stuart’s comparison date of 1799). She finishes her discussion of this issue by declaring that “when the English ambassadress asked leave to visit the seraglio, it was peremptorily denied, as contrary to the fundamental rules of the monarchy” (59).

Despite her family’s denials, Isobel Grundy concludes that Montagu most certainly entered and successfully negotiated the harem without engaging in an ethnosexual relationship with any man, let alone with the Sultan (it seems unlikely that such an affair on the part of the

English Ambassadress could be kept quiet even if she had conducted it). Indeed, Grundy writes that there “is no truth in later rumors which, as Lady Louisa put it, ‘would give us all the honour of descending from the Sultan Achmet’” and argues that there is likewise little chance that there was “some other lover” in Lady Mary’s life at the time (149). Montagu’s letters, then, depict a woman clearly able to do just as Aubin’s and Haywood’s fictional captives did: enter and leave a harem unscathed, and without any evidence that their sexual ‘morality’ had been compromised. Her letters suggest, then, that it was possible for an English woman to enter into a space restricted completely to men, engage with, and share the knowledge of, its inhabitants, and return home to share that ‘feminine wisdom’ with society.

But for Montagu’s family and her contemporary critics, much more seemed to be at stake than Montagu’s truthfulness about her visit to the harem. Leslie Peirce has written that, for Europeans, “the harem is undoubtedly the most prevalent symbol in...myths constructed around the theme of Muslim sensuality” that writers like Aaron Hill wrote were “part of Harem life” (3). Peirce continues, noting that “in the Sultan’s harem, orgiastic sex became a metaphor for power corrupted” (3). Montagu’s support for harem life comes, for her family, to be read as support for this ‘tyranny,’ which in the case of the Ottoman harem, is actually support for the overturning of patriarchal government structures.

Peirce notes that:

the head of the harem was the mother of the reigning sultan. The Queen Mother exercises authority over both family members – royal offspring, the consorts of the sultan, who might themselves acquire considerable power, and unmarried or widowed princesses, and the administrative/service hierarchy of the harem (6).

Peirce's research demonstrates that women were "high-ranking administrative officers of the harem" (6) and though Westerners made the "erroneous assumption that the seclusion of women precluded their exercise of any influence beyond the physical boundaries of the harem itself" (7) harem women could gather a significant amount of power. Because, as Peirce suggests, Westerners viewed the harem as a private space synonymous with their own domestic arrangements, they also equated the "meddling" of women in government" in the Ottoman empire as one of its main downfalls. For Montagu's family, her meddling in public health affairs, combined with her ability to influence the Royal family and other aristocratic families in these important issues, evoked the power of harem women, who, especially for those of "superior status," had "considerable authority not only over other women, but also over younger males in the family" (7). Women in the harem were also allowed to be "property owners [and] litigants in property, inheritance, divorce and other kinds of legal suits" (8). For a woman like Montagu, who got no money upon her marriage of convenience to a man she did not love and separated from later in her life, the revelations that emerged in the later eighteenth century that harem women had unprecedented access to "economical and social power" (8) would have caused her family to make associations between Montagu's life and the control that Turkish women had in similar circumstances.

More than this freedom to divorce and sue for inheritance if necessary, harem life offered women access to government operations that women in England would not have for two hundred years. Peirce writes that "the household compound served as the locus of government; the highest organ of government, the imperial council, met within the walls of the...palace, the Sultan's home" (8). For the wife and daughter of the Prime Minister of

England, Montagu's support for the customs of the Ottoman harem that emerge in her support for inoculation and her desire to enter publicly into the debate surrounding it, would have been read as the call for English women to have access to the highest reaches of male authority and control in England. Montagu clearly supported the idea that women – mothers, in the case of the inoculation debate – could influence British civil life. Lady Louisa Stuart's denial of Montagu's entrance into the harem, and Lady Bute's and Lady Craven's insistence that someone else wrote the *Letters*, are attempts to negate any notion that Montagu might have supported, and even welcomed, the harem as an example of a society that dismantled the concept of restricted female interaction in public matters.

Adding to their worries was Montagu's insistence that she have her son inoculated by Turkish harem women, and her use of her daughter as a tool in this debate once she returned home. Despite our enduring preconceived notions, Tubi Demirci and Selcuk Aksim Somel write that Islamic law “provided a relatively free sphere for women to control their bodies” (378) and, taking into consideration the power accorded to women in the harem, Montagu's intervention into the small pox variolation debate can be read as an attempt to institute a more Turkish idea of life in England by giving aristocratic women more control over public health policies, their bodies, and the bodies of future citizens. Considering that this kind of female involvement was credited with the downfall of the Ottoman empire (379), it's clear that any support for harem life that may have been read in Montagu's *Letters* could have been construed as support for a redefinition of the role of women in public life as Britons knew it.

Montagu describes the inoculation process first in a letter to Sarah Chiswell, dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717. Montagu tells Chiswell: “the Small Pox so fatal and so general amongst us is



here entirely harmless by the invention of engrafting” (I.338). By writing this letter, Montagu makes public her support for – and participation in – a relationship of cultural exchange that not only involves, but requires, the acceptance of a tiny bit of foreign matter into the body of each inoculated person. By publicizing that support, Montagu draws attention in her lifetime to her inappropriate entrance into public debate, and with the publication of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* after her death, is drawn into her family’s fears that she supported the overthrow of British ways of life and governmental policies.

Montagu describes the process of inoculation in her letter to Chiswell. She writes:

There is a set of old Women who make it their business to perform the Operation. Every Autumn in the month of September, when the great Heat is abated, people send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small pox...the old woman comes with a nutshell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox and asks what veins you please to have open’d. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch) and puts into the vein as much venom as can lye upon the head of her needle, and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell, and in this manner open up 4 or 5 veins. (I.339)

Though the practice of inoculation was taken up eventually, and improved through the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Montagu’s knowledge of the practice aligns her inextricably with female ‘quackery’ that had yet to be vetted and approved of by male authorities.

Narin Hassan writes that, in this letter to Chiswell, Montagu “takes a more practical stance, dealing with a subject that many readers imagined as a primary danger of foreign travel –

contagion and disease” (22). Hassan’s point here forces us to consider the way in which Montagu approached this idea of disease and contagion. For her, Turkey is not a place from which a traveler must protect herself, but rather a place where a traveler must go to be protected from the contagion at home. In this way, Montagu’s discussion of inoculation evokes my contention about female travelers in Aubin’s and Haywood’s novels, and in the female castaway texts of chapter three: women find protection from the dangers of home in the foreign space.

There is little wonder, considering these facts, that Montagu faced criticism about her support for inoculation. The practice, as Montagu relates it to Chiswell, is tied to ideas of female power and freedom in the harem. Hassan points out to us that there is a “familial, female and collaborative” notion to variolation, that suggests a “tone of scientific authority and detail” that women at home are prohibited from accessing (23). That variolation is an “intimate procedure” that is linked to the “female medicine and private female medical practices” that I argue below became the target of the Royal College of Surgeons, leaves little space for wonder about why Montagu was so despised by her critics (23).

#### Seraglio, Sex, Smallpox: Montagu’s Role in Contagion

Donna Landry writes that “when the letters from the Turkish embassy were published, Montagu was posthumously subjected to intense public scrutiny” (316), but during her lifetime Montagu suffered under this scrutiny as well. Grundy reports that: “face-to-face hostility met her on many of her visits – blatant from her equals, covert from servants – and even in the streets she encountered people ‘taught to hoot at her as an unnatural mother, who had risked the lives of her own children’” (212). Grundy writes that Alexander Pope’s “hoarily generic charges” against Montagu revolved around her being “dirty, promiscuous and vain” (268), but

these are, generally speaking, charges we frequently find leveled against women perceived to be behaving against prescribed behavioral norms. Pope's attack "charges Montagu with the grave *literary* fault of gender transgression" (Grundy 269) and, in leveling this charge at Montagu in a manner that evokes sexual contagion, Pope intimates that the one-time object of his affections had become a polluting figure in England, like smallpox itself.

### Smallpox

Historians, medical professionals, and literary scholars alike have documented the horrors that smallpox posed to British society in Montagu's time, and indeed the entire world until its eradication was officially announced in 1977. David E. Shuttleton writes that, for England:

the deaths of Prince Henry and Princess Mary, brother and sister of Charles II within months of their return from exile in 1660 served to alert the whole nation to the increased danger of what earlier medical texts often describe as a relatively mild disease of childhood. (1)

Two factors exacerbated the fear of smallpox among British culture: the first, that the disease could be transmitted through the air, even without contact with an infected person. Shuttleton notes that "though smallpox could be spread through the handling of infected clothes" the real danger existed in the primary mode of transmission, which he notes is from "particles of moisture in a sufferer's breath and from the corpses of victims" (5). Increasing the fear of contagion was the mere fact that "aerial infection could occur over distances of hundreds of yards" (5). Corpses, Shuttleton notes, were infectious until the process of decomposition was complete. The second issue at hand was "the power of smallpox to leave permanent

disfigurement” on the body, serving as a constant reminder to onlookers that a victim had suffered from the terrible disease. The disease scarred Montagu herself, and marred her beauty at a very young age. Shuttleton, quoting Steven Connor, suggests the reasons why this visibility was so unsettling for English society: Connor describes a “panicky and unstable response” to a disease that featured “the nauseating phantasmagoria of rotting, eruptive and squamous skin that constituted the actual bodyscape in the eighteenth century” (Shuttleton 3).

When we consider that there was, in the eighteenth century, “a general consensus that it [smallpox] had been carried into Europe in the eleventh century from its assumed origins in the over-heated climate of Northern Africa by Islamic invaders” (7) it became very difficult to divorce Montagu, herself a victim of smallpox who was left badly scarred and without eyelashes for the rest of her life, and a traveler from the area of the world in which smallpox was said to originate, from the idea that she carried contagion with her. For a culture dealing with fears of Ottoman captivity and worries that hundreds of captives would return to England somehow contaminated or otherwise marked with signs of alterity, the physical symptoms of smallpox – some of which remained long after the disease had run its course – was a permanent reminder of Britain’s troubled relationship with the East and issues of cultural contagion more generally. Indeed, there is a sense in which England’s greatest fears had come true. Wendy Frith and Gillian Perry suggest that: “by the end of the seventeenth century, smallpox, an acute and highly contagious disease, had become the most common European pestilence” (111).

Because Montagu’s family is rightly aware, as Lady Stuart confirms, of the benefits of Montagu’s interventions in inoculation science, the only recourse they have to counter arguments that Montagu was, in Frith’s words, a “disorderly, aggressive, lascivious, ‘unnatural’

woman, verbally and sexually out of control” was to deny that she had ever entered into the kind of place where unnatural women were believed to be found. It is curious that Frith notes that Montagu was “verbally” out of control, emphasizing the ways in which Montagu engaged with public discourse in ways she should not have.

It is not necessarily that Montagu dared to have an opinion about medical discourse that polarized the Church and some physicians – like William Wagstaffe – against inoculation and against Montagu, but rather her insistence on engaging publicly with male officials (something Montagu declares she is hesitant to do in her inoculation letter, but felt, after the outbreak of 1721, that she had no choice). Lynette Hunter notes that “one of the most startling aspects of publishing in the 1650’s is the sudden appearance of a group of books of scientific, pharmaceutical and medicinal texts by women” (“Women and Domestic Medicine” 89). These texts, however, were published by women, for women, and medical advice came packaged with household tips, recipes, and other domestic advice. Aristocratic women, Hunter argues, “were often highly involved in medicine and household science,” but notes that, “the history is largely within the context of the country estate or semi-rural living” (“Domestic Medicine” 100-1). Montagu’s crime, it seems, was to bring her privately gained (and semi-privately circulated) knowledge of inoculation to the public. Hunter notes that:

as medicine and chemistry became an activity for aristocratic men during the 1650’s, those men needed a way of differentiating their work from that of their female counterparts, partly to avoid being trivialized...and partly because of a growing differentiation between gendered activities. (“Sisters of the Royal Society” 188)

Robert Shoemaker argues that the masculinization of medicine was part of a larger trend initiated by the College of Physicians to marginalize the roles of “quacks, men and women who practiced medicine without licenses on the fringe of the law, but who played an important role in the provision of health care in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (183). There can be no doubt that women who practiced inoculation in Turkey would have been considered “quacks” to some members of the College of Physicians at the time. Montagu’s entrance into the increasingly masculinized sphere of scientific medicine, and her wholehearted support for inoculation, aligned her with other kinds of women who willingly left the private world that was thought to be their province to enter a field of masculine circulation.

William Wagstaffe, in his “Letter to Dr. Freind Shewing the Danger and Uncertainty of Inoculation,” (1722) draws on several of the tropes that were used against Montagu, against Turkey, and against inoculation more specifically. He states that “the country from whence we derived this Experiment will have but very little influence on our Faith, if we consider either the Nature of the Climate or the capacity of its inhabitants” and then notes that inoculation is “practiced by a few *Ignorant Women* amongst an illiterate and unthinking people” (6).

Wagstaffe’s condemnation of the Turkish people, and the women who perform inoculation (including Montagu) as “ignorant” and “illiterate” matches the beliefs of the College of Physicians that women, along with ‘quacks,’ had no place in scientific debate. Referencing Montagu directly, Wagstaffe speaks out about the “sanguine traveler from Turkey” who supports inoculation, and then, in a rhetorical turn that seems to highlight issues of national purity and the threat that inoculation, sex, and other exchanges with the East posed to it, he notes that “[English] blood, if we speak of it as national” is susceptible to all kinds of threats.

He likens inoculation to “transfusing the blood of a Mangey dog into a sound one” (54) and, in doing so, points out the ‘unnatural’ use of Turkish medicine by the British. He even suggests that “breeding women” face the threat of miscarriage if they are inoculated, which serves to alert his readers of the threat posed to the very future of England if inoculation is allowed. Wagstaffe even calls Timoni’s work into question, commenting that “he seems indeed to give entire credit to what the women told him” about inoculation, rather than what he saw himself (58).

Wagstaffe’s pamphlet, published in 1722, highlights some clear anxieties about the process of inoculation, but the College of Surgeons was not the only group who attacked inoculation and, by extension, Montagu. Edmund Massey, in a sermon preached in 1722, evokes the biblical tale of Job being smote with boils by Satan to test his faith. Massey suggests to his listeners that, rather than being inoculated against smallpox in order to keep from getting the disease, “our church advises those who languish upon the bed of sickness, to examine themselves for what cause this evil is come upon them” (10-11). Apparently making an exception for the use of inoculation among the Turkish people, Massey argues that, “where doctrines of salvation are not known, and a regular dependence upon Providence is postponed to the absurd belief of a fatality,” it is understandable that the Turks would surrender to “impious or unreasonable practices” (4). For the English, however, no such excuses are provided. Massey declares “in a country where better Principles are established, where God’s government of the world is for the most part undisputed, and slavish implicit belief happily superseded by Rational inquires” men cannot be excused for practicing inoculation, which “abuses their understanding as well as insults their religion” (4).

It is Massey's terminology that draws our attention to the connection he makes with Turkey, and, implicitly with people like Montagu who support the practice. He notes that inoculation is a "diabolical operation," a move that ties the women who perform the practice with Satan, a key idea in the face of Montagu's attempts to distance them from this implication in her June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1717 letter.

If we consider Wagstaffe and Massey as examples, we can begin to understand the ways in which Montagu's introduction of inoculation became about much more than attempting to prevent the spread of a disease. Montagu, or so those against inoculation or against Montagu herself said, entered into the deepest and most secret parts of Turkey and emerged contaminated with suspect knowledge that helped to demonstrate that the harem is, in fact, a mysterious place that the Western men cannot penetrate but that offers a political model for female engagement in political life in England. She then returned home, with an example of the ways in which that knowledge could pollute English society: she brought her son, who, for better or worse, had undergone the procedure, and used both him and her daughter as experimental subjects in the introduction of a contagion into the "national blood" of England. Not only was Montagu labeled an unnatural mother for experimenting on her children, and circulating her "knowledge" in public, but also for suggesting that aristocratic women might have formative influence on the lives and development of their children. This public transformation of Montagu from educated, aristocratic woman into a monstrous perversion of a governmental system blamed for the downfall of an entire empire was, it seems, the only way the English public could embrace her success in the science of inoculation.



### Chapter 3: Conceptualizing Female Castaway Narratives

*In which we find our heroines isolated from the metropole, threatened by nature and beast, aided by shark, lion and robot, and finally in possession of a colony*

Long before the publication of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1717, narratives of shipwreck – and the castaways who resulted from them – held a fascination for the reading public, and Defoe's work drew unprecedented attention to the plight of the castaway. Unfortunately, scholars and critics, particularly in history and literature, have largely ignored the way in which these so-called Robinsonades use, and represent, the figure of the female castaway.<sup>14</sup> In analyzing three female castaway texts – *The Female American* by Unca Eliza Winkfield (1767), Charles Dibdin's *Hannah Hewitt, or The Female Crusoe* (1789) and Marguerite D'Aubenton's *Zelia in the Desert* (1798) – I examine this popular genre for information about the ways in which eighteenth-century Britain understood, and reacted to, the figure of the female castaway in fiction.

As earlier chapters of this dissertation have demonstrated, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, anxieties about what Britons were doing while abroad, and who specifically was taking advantage of England's growing maritime presence arose and were reflected in fiction and the press of time. Though ideas about the dangers of 'going native' in the colonies were circulating in discussions about both men and women, the facts of reproduction – that a woman could carry the evidence of miscegenation in her body and then bring that child home with her – marks a woman in the colonies as potentially dangerous to the

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<sup>14</sup> Though I recognize that the term 'Female Robinsonade' has been widely accepted as a way to identify these texts, I will discuss them using the more neutral 'female castaway' in an attempt to distance them, in some way, from the assumption that these are mere imitations of Defoe's text with a female protagonist. There are similarities, of course, between Defoe's work and the ones studied in this chapter, but those similarities have often erroneously led critics to dismiss these texts as mere 'female' imitations of Defoe.

purity of the British nation and damaging to British ideas of civility and morality. That European women might face sexual captivity at the hands of the 'savage' male further marked them as potential victims of sexual violence in the colonies, but, as in the case of the female captives studied in chapter one, British thinkers and pamphlet writers failed to see that, if women were in danger of savage attacks in the colonies, they were also in danger of those same attacks at home. What the female castaway narratives studied here suggest, then, is that fears about the woman 'going native' are not grounded in the experiences of the castaway woman, but rather in conceptions of her that are suggested by the racial and sexual discourse of the time. Beyond neutralizing the threat of 'going native,' these texts also rewrite eighteenth-century ideas that the unescorted woman was always in danger overseas. Again like the female captives discussed in chapter one, female castaways face trials in the metropole that are not paralleled in their experiences as castaways. Instead, female castaways find themselves in their unique positions because they have been the victims of male violence in some way at home, or at the hands of the British men around them. They manage, unlike real-life castaways such as Alexander Selkirk, not only to flourish on their new island homes, but also to settle islands in ways that aid in expanding Britain's imperial holdings. Thus, the ideological functions performed by the female castaway are two-fold. First, she intervenes in discourses of female victimization that we frequently see in the eighteenth-century novel. Secondly, by positing that the colonial space is one that offers women protection from the dangers of home, these texts encourage us to view women as crucial to the imperial drive.

This chapter begins with a review of the historical and discursive contexts that surrounded the production of these female castaway texts, including a discussion of the effect a

life abroad was believed to have on Britons who strayed far from home. I then move on to a discussion of the castaway figure generally and the female castaway specifically. I follow this with a discussion of the historically and discursively important wreck of the *Grosvenor* East Indiaman off the coast of Africa in 1782, an incident that not only figures in one of the texts studied here, but also encapsulates the fears, anxieties and realities of the British public's confrontation of expanding maritime travel. Finally, and centrally, I analyze the figure of the female castaway in four narratives: *The Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* (1751), *The Female American*, *Zelia in the Desert*, and *Hannah Hewit*.

Between 1689 and 1815, Britain's geographical landscape grew and changed dramatically. According to P.J. Marshall, this period encapsulated a considerable growth in the "scale of British activities outside of Europe" (1). Both "the area and the number of people under British rule increased greatly," and this increase was accompanied by "far more ships" that "took out many more British goods to colonial markets and brought back much greater quantities of mostly tropical goods" (1). Marshall also argues that after Britain's "watershed" victories in the Seven Years War in 1763, British governments of all political stripes "began to concern themselves with colonial issues and to commit resources to overseas war on an unprecedented scale" (1). All of this, of course, led to increasingly greater numbers of British civilians, including women, taking to the sea in order to travel to newly-settled lands or to trade goods between one port and another.

Though their geography is a bit confused at times, shipwreck narratives often take place off the coast of the islands known as the West Indies ('settled' by the British between the start of the seventeenth century, with their possession of Barbados, and 1763, when the Windward

Islands, Trinidad, and British Guyana became their possessions) or, after Cook's voyages, on various South Pacific Islands that surround Tahiti.

Marshall and others have discussed the effect that rapidly growing colonial holdings, and the growing numbers of British citizens living outside of Britain, had on the people who lived in the metropole. Marshall explains that the "encounter of British people with America, Africa and Asia brought them face to face with peoples far more alien, against whom they defined themselves as yet more superior" and notes that "advocates of Imperial expansion presented these 'barbarous nations' as a wide field of action for Britons to act as civilizing agents" (219). The effect that the climate of these countries had on inhabitants and visitors was a major component of discourse about the safety of travel, with the majority of commenters believing that, without the social organization of British society, many visitors would succumb to a kind of climatological degeneration and come to resemble 'natives' or 'savages'.

Critics such as Kathleen Wilson, Roxann Wheeler and Maximillian Novak have all discussed the way that life on a tropical island was believed to lead to degeneration in the natives of Britain, even if the individual had only recently migrated to the tropics (Wheeler *Robinson Crusoe* 89). Wheeler cautions us against assuming that, in the early eighteenth century, skin color was as an important a marker of difference as it is today, even though it was often a trait associated with those in the torrid zone. She does note, however, that in the later decades of the eighteenth century, the idea of race became "more fixed" and "almost unalterable" (*Complexion* 22, 32). Written during a time when ideas of race, civility, and 'national identity' were shifting, these castaway texts do not always feature skin color as a marker of difference, and frequently complicate our notions of racial discourse by focusing on

class standing or nobility as a marker of greater importance than race. For Novak, Wilson, and Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, the island space – including the fact of its isolation from England – represented a geographical area where almost anything could happen to a lone castaway, and where the castaway faced degeneration, madness and death. Despite Hume’s contention that “the same set of manners will follow a nation, and adhere to them over the whole globe, as well as the same laws and language” (qtd. in Wilson, *Island Race* 13), stories of castaways, renegades and Englishmen turned pirate called these theories into question. For those who kept up with stories of piracy and shipwreck, Wilson argues that “it seemed that the national character, acquired through propinquity, could, when removed from the structures of civilized life, quickly give way” (*Island Race* 13). My contention is that this fear becomes embodied in the female castaway most specifically in response to stories of real-life castaways who returned with varying degrees of visible ‘degeneration’ and the stories that emerged from Africa about the fate of the women aboard the shipwrecked *Grosvenor*. This chapter, then, joins critical discourse about the “protracted, recurrent and obsessive fears” surrounding female civility, sexuality and susceptibility in the mid-to-late eighteenth century (*Island Race* 6).

I argue that the island space is not only constructed as being safer for the unprotected British woman than life at home, but that by landing on their islands, British women manage to demonstrate that they are more than able to negotiate the risks of travel without also risking their civility. Furthermore, the situations in which the female castaways studied here find themselves are managed only by the upper-middle-class castaway assuming the traits of lower class women who, in their greater access to public circulation, gain the skills necessary to establish peaceful and progressive colonies.

In 1774 Edward Long reported that both physiological and behavioral changes could be seen in an English person who spent time in Jamaica. He writes that the cheeks of English people living there “are remarkably high boned, and the sockets of the eyes deeper than is commonly observed among the natives of England,” and goes on to document how white women were “influenced in their manners, speech, and body language by the domestic slaves with whom they were associated” (ix). According to Long, the “drawling, constant jibberish” of “negroe domestics” quickly becomes the common discourse of white women in the colony (ix). The women also take on “no small tincture of their [the slaves’] awkward carriage and vulgar manners; all of which they do not easily get rid of, even after an English education” (xi). Though the extremism of Long’s racism is well known, his remarks reflect a common anxiety about how a traveler could remain ‘civilized’ in ‘uncivilized’ places. Beyond the fear of degeneration was the very real possibility that Britons who lived overseas would never live long enough to return to England. According to Erin Skye Mackie, many travelers succumbed during the “treacherous first stage of tropical life called ‘seasoning,’ a period of initiation through which the human body and soul, should they survive, became inoculated to the climate of tropic colonial life” (250). Mackie goes on to explain that this process often involved a battle with one or more diseases to which Britons simply had no immunity. These included “bouts of malaria, yellow fever, dry bellyache” and were combined with what she terms “psychic alienation and capitulation to the anaesthetizing seductions of hell-bent dissipation” (250).

Rebecca Weaver-Hightower notes that, along with the belief that the colonies themselves were “pathogenic,”

tropical climates were thought to be dangerous to the mental health and intellect of colonizers. Medical experts considered the landscape itself to be threatening to Europeans because of the heat and intensity of its sun, which was thought to cause lethargy, sickness, and even mental and racial degeneration. These climactic symptoms were thought to explain both the ‘natural’ regressiveness of indigenous people and the dangers to the not-sufficiently disciplined colonizers. (138)

British culture operated on “expanded concepts of civility – taste, refinement, discernment, generosity of spirit – [that] were heralded as the essence of a superior English culture” (Wilson *Island Race* 144). Men and women living overseas, especially in warmer areas, “seemed to exhibit exuberantly antithetical values” (144) to those the British at home exhibited. This fact encapsulates some of the anxieties about how British citizens, and especially women, were thought to behave when they began to align themselves with ‘uncivilized’ cultures.

Among the seductions that Mackie mentions was the temptation to enter into a sexual relationship with a “savage,” a phenomenon very much on the minds of travelers, metropolitans, and those who governed rules of conduct for both. Fears about these relationships, Daileader suggests, were not uncommon to British society at least in terms of dramatic works. Sudipta Sen and Phillipa Levine have also written about the problems of interracial marriage in Britain’s territorial holdings, and with trading partners. Though Sen explains that as early as 1688, directors of the East India Company hoped that there might be a way to “induce by all means...our soldiers to marry with the Native women” (128-9), these marriages quickly became taboo, and were, according to Levine, always taboo if they involved a native man and a white woman (140). In studying some narratives and real-life events featuring

castaways, we discover that many of these anxieties are mapped onto the experience and the body of the female castaway to the extent that travel was viewed as being far too dangerous for most women to undertake. What the fictional texts that form the focus of this chapter demonstrate, however, is that these anxieties are ones the female castaway in fiction manages to neutralize and replace with effective and liberating female-established locales that embrace both British men and women.

With the growing British imperial drive and the dangers that met the traveler who participated in the voyages that helped to keep Britain in a position of primacy in the later eighteenth century, writers of British fiction began to contemplate the darker side of travel in their works. When we take into account concerns about ‘going native’ similar to the ones faced by Turkish captives, it is no surprise that the Robinsonade emerged as a key genre of travel writing, with Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* standing as the most well-known (though not the first) text in the genre.

### The Robinsonade

Artur Blaim has explained that the Robinsonade is “a literary genre in which the structurally central position is occupied by the desert island section depicting the life of a single man or woman...placed in isolation by other men or forces of nature” (6). The function of these texts, explains Weaver-Hightower, is in part to “connect the right to authority over the colonial landscape (in this case, the colony, not the imperial center) to one’s right and ability to command one’s own flesh” (xiv). That these castaway narratives were crucial to the formation of national identity, and to contemporary studies of national identity, is clear. As Carl Fisher points out, there are “few places without a specific national Robinson, as denoted in the book



titles: the French Robinson, the Dutch Robinson, the German Robinson and the American Robinson” (131).

Because of the popularity of Defoe’s text when it was first published in 1719, and its continued popularity among students and scholars of literature, there is a wealth of writing about Defoe’s eponymous hero. Because this chapter attempts to move away from *Robinson Crusoe* as a model for female castaway texts, I do not engage in any in-depth discussion of Defoe’s text here. The germane element of *Robinson Crusoe* is Crusoe’s status as a castaway, and this topic is discussed at length by commentators on the novel.

Maximillian Novak has argued that before Defoe’s text was published, “accounts of castaways usually stressed the miseries of loneliness and the gradual physical and mental deterioration of the unfortunate victim” (19). In every castaway story lurks the ghost of Alexander Selkirk, the “most successful” of British castaways according to Novak (19). Selkirk famously lost most of his powers of speech while marooned and could barely communicate when he was eventually rescued. According to Novak, Defoe’s text “created an enduring fictional myth about the already problematized encounter with nature and with the seemingly natural inhabitants of the newly discovered lands” (22). Weaver-Hightower, who takes a psychoanalytic approach to her reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, notes:

castaway narratives...serve as a microcosm of larger imperial desires and anxieties, since many of these island narratives map desires and anxieties of a sociocultural phenomenon (colonization) into a representative narrative contained in a specific space (often the physical and psychological space of the novel) and onto the individual mind and the body of a man. (xxii)

Though Weaver-Hightower doesn't discuss the possibility of a *female* castaway in her text, I agree that castaway narratives encapsulate and attempt to think through the anxieties related to colonization and travel overseas. Writing about *Robinson Crusoe* more specifically, Michael Mascuch notes that part of the reason why Defoe's text was so successful as a work of fiction is,

in the modern polity, the status of every person is comparable to Crusoe's to the extent that each is disembedded and cast away from the institutions of the family, church and other corporations in which pre-modern self-identities were negotiated and delimited...as a consequence, by the eighteenth century, individual integrity had become an issue as it had never been before. (31)

It seems that, for Mascuch, the movement away from personal identity through church and family toward a sense of a greater national identity held by all Britons had a significant effect on the way castaways – including female castaways in particular – have been viewed. It is this national identity, and the way it is tied to female sexual identity, that we can see clearly in female castaway narratives. Though the individual integrity of the female castaway is always in question, she shows herself to be so inextricably linked with the national and cultural integrity of Britain that it proves impossible for her to surrender these values, even though discourses of the time frequently argued that female travel should be restricted in order to save women from the terrors that could come from travel.

### The Castaway Woman

Blaim has suggested that “the functioning of Defoe's work as a generic model was determined not only by the immanent features of the text but also by a variety of extratextual factors connected with changing cultural tendencies and the demands of the reading public”

(34). Jeannine Blackwell wrote one of the first articles on female castaway narratives and, though she focuses mainly on the German tradition, the generic conventions of English texts are almost identical. Blackwell suggests that previous critics have reduced the role of the female in castaway texts to “sex and cooking” (6) but she reminds us, however, that “in a time when nice girls were not supposed to read adventures, when European women were not taking to sea in droves,” female castaway tales were wildly popular (6). Robin Miskolcze argues that, from the seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries, shipwreck and castaway narratives almost exclusively featured men, but:

by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women came to figure prominently in these narratives, not only because they went to sea more often as wives of captains, emigrants, convicts, slaves and lady’s companions, but also because...they were integral to developing notions of gender and national identity in Britain and the United States. (42)

Miskolcze further suggests that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women were thought to be “representatives of national virtue and Christian fortitude” and, because of this, “the figure of the shipwrecked Anglo woman in particular heightened national sentiment and influenced efforts at national security” (42). In these ways, she explains, female castaway narratives “contributed to the construction of notions of gender, racist definitions of the native Other, and a social imaginary that relied upon identification of transatlantic ties” (42). Key for this discussion is Miskolcze’s contention that “women are often represented in shipwreck narratives as struggling to maintain not just feminine sensibilities, but also their white and European appearances well” (44). The destabilization of cultural roles and conceptions of national

identity in these texts is an important part of this chapter, but Miskolcze misreads the importance of issues of race and national identity when she claims that “what underlies the narratives is the shipwreck victim’s ‘whiteness’ more so than her geographical origins” (44). I argue that especially in the case of the mixed-race Unca Eliza Winkfield, heroine of *The Female American*, national identity, class, and markers of ‘civility’ are much more important in these texts than issues of race.

Kathleen Wilson highlights the interconnectedness of race, civilization and gender in travel writing. She argues that, “embracing the idea that Englishwomen represented the highest level of civilization” (*Island Race* 17), those who failed to exhibit these qualities came to be regarded as having descended into some degree of ‘savagery.’ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have argued that, historically, “the shipwreck was something of a leveler, where the radical protestant, the sturdy rogue, the redundant craftsman, the catholic recusant, the wild Irishman, the commonist, and the cutpurse met on roughly equal terms” (17). But the female castaways depicted in the texts studied here do not fit into Linebaugh and Rediker’s framework. Though these fictional women face ‘savagery,’ depravity, and a loss of status, they never adopt qualities that signal any form of degeneration, and have no difficulty remaining ‘civilized.’ They do, however, make use of the skills possessed by women of the lower classes to survive on their islands. Miskolcze’s suggestion that “shipwreck[s] could destabilize or eliminate a woman’s gendered identity” (44) simply proves inaccurate when applied to these texts. Likewise, C.M. Owen’s recent suggestion that the island space is a “place where...all such oppositions, hierarchies, and marks of status can be suspended” does not reflect the realities of the texts studied here, where those elements help the female castaway to maintain her civility (12). In

maintaining this civility, the female castaway acts as a reassuring figure, trying to convince the metropole that the woman traveler is capable of handling herself in the face of the kind of adversity Miskolcze believes to be a stumbling block.

In the face of Britain's increasing interaction with other cultures in their own territories and the always-persistent need to populate the colonies with British citizens, the stability – and purity – of 'British' identity was integral to colonial and imperial missions. Britons could not bring 'civilization' (and its concomitant associations with mercantile capitalism, Christianity, and political stability) if they failed to remain civilized themselves. This chapter argues, then, that the figure of the female castaway becomes the model for all colonists, regardless of gender, and offers an idea of colonial life that argues that colonies established by women provide a successful model of imperialism.

#### Beasts, Natives and Englishmen

Before I move on to an analysis that shows that female castaways in the three fictions studied here do not succumb to the threats and dangers that island life poses, it is necessary to document the ways that fiction writers interpreted what those dangers might be.

Among the texts that emerged after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 is Ralph Morris's *The Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* (1751). This text, though not specifically a female castaway narrative, features a Crusoe figure, John, who is shipwrecked on an island with a shipmate named Thomas. The events of this text are, admittedly, outlandish – they seem to mimic *Gulliver's Travels* more than *Robinson Crusoe* – but the most bizarre scenes in the text prove to be integral parts in managing anxieties about female travel.

There are two key scenes in the *Life...of John Daniel* that illustrate the supposed threats to a female traveler's safety. The first is the matter of Thomas, John Daniel's castaway friend, who, as it happens, turns out to be Ruth, a woman in disguise. For the first several chapters of the story, John Daniel believes himself to be castaway on the island with a male shipmate. One day, however, Thomas goes missing, and when John Daniel finally finds him, Thomas is "lying on his back...unable to speak or cry out for pain, neither could he raise himself forward to sit up in the least" (76). Daniel goes on to say that he could "by no means collect from [Thomas] the cause of his disaster. All I could get out was 'let me die, let me die and die here'" (76). After an argument between the pair about the extent of Thomas's injuries, the injured castaway confesses that he is really Ruth, a woman in disguise, traveling in an attempt to find a lost lover. The description of the way in which the newly revealed Ruth is injured is key to any analysis of the dangers that island life posed to women. She tells John Daniel that,

whilst I was cutting a bough, I slipped from the tree, and fell upon a doated snag,  
which has penetrated my groin, and by the pain it gives me, I believe is broken into  
it. (79)

That the island itself is able to symbolically rape the English woman suggests that the female traveler is a more-or-less constant target of sexual violence, even from targets (like inanimate objects) not normally seen as a threat. Daniel searches for the injury and declares that he finds "that a piece of sharp wood, as thick as a truncheon at the larger end, had penetrated the rim of her belly, near the groin, and was broken off, rather within the skin" (79). The language used in this passage – the emphasis on the 'groin' as the injured area, rather than the stomach, or the torso, or some other area, – draws attention to the act as a kind of sexual assault itself. The

suggestion here is that, without anyone to protect her (John Daniel, of course, sends 'Thomas' off on his own to gather wood), the female castaway is in particular danger of being violated by the 'savage' island on which she finds herself trapped. That it is actually the *island* itself that is implicated in the violation extends the fear of the wild to the fear of the wilderness. Captured here is the fear that an uncontrolled, and uncontrollable, entity can pose genuine threats to the bodily integrity and purity of the female castaway. This anxiety, then, is two-fold. Firstly, that men will ultimately fail to protect the women they are charged with protecting, especially in light of an education that leaves women unable to protect themselves; and, secondly, that even when seemingly hidden or protected, the female castaway, and all female travelers, are a target for sexual violence.

Shortly after the discovery that Thomas is actually Ruth, the pair are married, despite Ruth's initial quest for her long lost love. Here, like the female captives of chapter one, marriage is possible even for the women who has suffered (symbolic) rape. Following the marriage, John Daniel and his son have a series of bizarre adventures, including one that raises the specter of the Englishwoman 'gone native' and fears of concomitant acts of miscegenation. John Daniel's son, apparently endowed with significant powers of invention, builds a rudimentary flying machine and embarks with his father in an attempt to rescue their family from isolation. Unfortunately, they crash-land on an island inhabited by a group of strange sea creatures. When the pair emerges from the wreckage, they hear "a loud articulate voice roar out and say something" (220). This voice is eventually revealed as belonging to an "elderly man, with short, bushy hair" who approaches the pair with a "naked woman" (220-221). Daniel, when he gets a better look at these individuals, tells us that:

two such figures...[were] never beheld before; they bore the exact resemblance of the human species in their erect posture and limbs, save their mouths were as broad as their whole faces, and have very little chins; their arms seemed all bone, and very thin, their hands had very long fingers, and webbed between, with long claws on them, and their feet were just the same, with very little heel; their legs and thighs long and strait, with strong scales on them, and the other parts of their bodies were exactly human, but covered with the same hair as a seal. (221-22)

This creature, seeing that John Daniel and his son are in need of help, invites them home to a “large dark room in the side of a rock” (223). After a few days, the “monster” (Daniel’s term) reveals his British heritage: “his father’s name was Miles Anderson...he had a publick education in the university of Oxford in England, and was generally reckoned to have attained great perfection, in most of the liberal sciences” (237). In his “fortieth year” Miles Anderson marries a “rich heiress,” whose guardian, “an elderman of London,” refused to pay her marriage settlement, another moment in which a masculine guardian fails to safeguard the well being of his charge. Shortly after this marriage, Anderson is awarded the “government of one of the new forts the English had erected on the coast of Africa” (238). On their way, the couple “met with a violent tempest” and were “thrown upon [a] rock...where the ship was beaten to pieces” (238). As is characteristic of castaway narratives, Anderson manages to extricate goods from the ship, but these supplies soon run short, and the pair are forced to go to “different parts of the rock, to try to fish to support nature” (239). Fortunately, they were “frequently so happy as to take some” food, and Anderson’s wife is soon with child. When she gives birth, she is, in the monster’s words, “delivered of myself and my sister, or my wife, which you please to call



her...for she is both to me” (240). We learn that Miles Anderson was so horrified at “the sight of two such misshapen and unaccountable creatures [they] are” that he unsuccessfully tries to drown them both (240). “To his great surprise,” however, the children turn out to be excellent swimmers, and Miles is forced to accept and care for them. The monster explains his appearance by telling Daniel and his son that, while his mother was carrying the twins, she received a “fright” from a “sea monster” (246), which affected the development of twins she was carrying. Though the plausibility of a “fright” a woman received while pregnant affecting her child was still much in debate in the eighteenth century, it is clear that Morris and his audience believed it was a possibility.

Curiously, John Daniel is able to look past the pair’s ghastly appearance, because, as the monster articulates “a human understanding...couched under [their] bestial form” and were taught the civilizing disciplines of “geography, mathematicks, astronomy, geometry, divinity, and arithmetick” from their father, they are ‘civilized’ by his standards (241). The monster is, in fact, so adept at these subjects that he is labeled a “perfect master” at fifteen (241). Though John Daniel’s acceptance of them might seem odd, Dror Wahrman notes that “up to the late eighteenth-century, civilization...was more often the primary category of difference, even the determinative one” (129), but in this case, the monster’s ability, along with John Daniel’s, to accept providence is also a key marker of civilization. And even after the death of their father, when “nature” creeps “more and more” upon them, and they begin to degenerate into their more ‘sea monster’ qualities, John Daniel believes they are civilized beings.

After the death of his mother, the monster tells John Daniel that he and his sister “thought it in no ways unlawful to indulge our natural appetites together,” and they produced

numerous children (242). That this happens immediately after the death of the mother – their last connection to England – highlights the dangers believed to be faced by the isolated castaway. Without someone to mirror the traits of civility, the castaway will soon forget social edicts that govern behavior. What happens after the relation of this story of incest and grotesque malformation is curious. Daniel tells the monster that, “as human faculties were the distinguishing mark of a reasonable soul, which was the perfect and most remaining substance,” he is of the opinion that, “of being capable to know and praise one’s maker, and thereby secure to one’s self a blessed immortality, was preferable to the most exact proportion of bodily parts” (244). For him, though their appearance is ghastly, the monsters are human because they share his faith and civility. Daniel believes that they were born the way they were because they were given a divine gift: their malformations are tools they need to survive in their particular circumstances (244). Believing that the monster is simply a deformed Englishman doing what he can to survive (*a la* Crusoe and Selkirk), Daniel approves of his new host.

One day, Daniel happens upon a locked writing desk that belonged to the monster’s parents. He opens this chest and reveals a stack of papers belonging to Johanna Anderson. Because the monster cannot read and declares the papers to be “entirely useless” to him, John Daniel undertakes the task of sorting through them. Daniel is aghast at the notion that the monster cannot read and write, but accepts that this is the fault of the creature’s web-like hands, not a sign of the monster’s lack of education and refinement. He finds, however, among the papers, a “sort of manuscript” written by Johanna in which she describes herself as a “child of hell” who “had been often in dumb shew solicited to embrace a sea monster” (256). This seduction continues until Johanna finally “cast off [her] love to [her] husband, and entered into

criminal commerce with this brute, this beast, this devil, this monster; nay, nor could [she] be satisfied without a daily repetition of [her] crime, till [she] became fruitful by him” (259). After these revelations, Daniel’s attitude changes, and in his response we find the fears of a nation about the traveling woman: Daniel tells us that he “could not refrain from having a worse opinion of him [the monster] than [he] had before” and immediately decides to leave the monster’s house (260). The idea that, suddenly, the monster is no longer rational, reasonable, or even a good host is based on his mother’s inability to fight off a strong marker of degeneration: sex with a ‘beast.’ Daniel writes that he “could no longer take the same satisfaction in the society and converse of the monster, or any of his brood, as [he] used to do; and began to form a design of leaving him” (261). Daniel and his son quickly depart from the island and the monster is never spoken about again. The implicit statement in Daniel’s retreat from the sea creature is not that the creature is too hideous to be tolerated, but that he is too uncivilized. Daniel’s retreat, then, is an integral moment in a text obsessed with the thought of transculturation. Contact with the sea monster is no longer contact with a civilized, but strange, being. Instead, the monster now threatens Daniel’s – and more importantly, the new generation of colonists represented by his son – level of civility.

Real-life moments in British history also serve to demonstrate anxieties about the increasing number of women travelers. Media and other ‘official’ reports of the wreck of the *Grosvenor* – which ran aground off the coast of South Africa on August 4, 1782 – can be read as if the shipwreck and the events that followed were an almost encyclopedic entry to England’s concerns about female travel. More remarkable than the fact of the wreck itself is the survival rate: of the one hundred and fifty passengers on board, one hundred and twenty-three managed

to make it safely to shore. Among those were twelve women and five children (though we only hear tell of one, Frances Hosea) who quickly came to represent the plight of all women who might become victims of shipwreck. In *Caliban's Shores*, Stephen Taylor documents – from news reports and an investigation following the repatriation of four of the crewmembers – the days following the shipwreck and the choice made by the ship's captain, Captain Coxon, to travel more than four hundred miles over the interior of Africa in search of a Dutch settlement. He writes that:

a company that included seven women – one of whom, Lydia Logie, was in an advanced stage of pregnancy – five children, a number of grievously injured men and a chief mate unable to stand, were set on a forced march of almost 400 miles along a tumultuous coast slashed by dozens of rivers and precipitous valleys, inhabited by wild animals and many more tribes of the supposedly savage people whom they now sought to avoid. (109)

Taylor documents how this large group eventually split into three smaller groups, which later, after death, abandonment, and perhaps some cannibalism, were reduced to a few stragglers, only eighteen of whom eventually made it to Cape Town.

Of those eighteen, only the four crewmembers returned to England and official reports about what happened to the rest were based solely on the testimony of these four men. These reports were vague about the fate of most of the castaways, but most concerning to officials were unanswered questions about the fate of the women who had been on board the *Grosvenor*. In the final tally, four of the women – Mary and Frances Hosea, wife and daughter of a high-ranking English official in Bengal; Lydia Logie, the pregnant wife of the ship's first mate; and a

Mrs. Sophia James, the elderly wife of a retired colonel – remain unaccounted for today.

Among the eighteen survivors who made it to Cape Town were two Indian ayahs who, when questioned, reported that Mary Hosea and her daughter Frances, along with Mrs. Logie, were alive when they parted ways. With the news that three women had survived much longer than the others, came reports that Bantus in the area had kidnapped the women, and that British men had been killed trying to save them (181).

The veracity of this report has never been confirmed: the Indian women had no idea what happened to the European women after they parted company, and all other reports were mere idle gossip coming from various travelers and explorers who claimed to have heard something of some white women living in the interior of Africa with tribes of Bantus. But in the rhetoric surrounding the wreck and the fate of its survivors, the actual facts of the situation became increasingly less important. An expedition sent to find the shipwreck and attempt to trace the path of the castaways found the ayahs and two groups of three sailors, but none of the Englishwomen were found. Concerned for their safety, some of the survivors set off to lead an expedition by the Dutch to try to discover what had happened to the women. That this mission took place “not at the instigation of a reluctant governor, but on the initiative of a handful of conscience-stricken colonists” is important: officially, the women were lost, but unofficially, much of the country – and many Dutch citizens as well – were quite concerned. The group left Cape Town on August 24, 1790, a little more than eight years after the initial shipwreck.

Newspaper reports are mostly silent about the fate of two male castaways who elected to live with Bantu tribes: one left his tribe when he was discovered and rescued, the other, originally believed to be mad by his fellow castaways, chose to remain with his adopted family

and eventually married and had children. These men don't feature in reports about the *Grosvenor*, and it seems likely that very few at home were concerned, or perhaps even knew, about them. So what, then, spurred this final expedition and drove the 'conscience-stricken colonists' to engage in the dangerous trek into the interior of Africa? Both the survivors and ordinary citizens alike were unable to stand the doubts about what fate befell Mrs. Logie and Mary and Frances Hosea.

The *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* for the first half of 1783 clearly captures the drama that surrounds the wreck of the *Grosvenor*.<sup>15</sup> On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1783 the paper reports that "a captain Dumeney, of the Dutch East India Company, who was taken on his passage from the Cape of Good Hope" arrived in London to report that "the Caffres had come down upon the people, and had killed several of the men who attempted to protect them." No mention is made of the women in these reports, but in the next article about the wreck that appeared a few days later:

a female correspondent not being able to support the idea of the fate, which it is said, befell the unhappy ladies, passengers in the *Grosvenor* East Indiaman, would esteem it benevolent, if any one in possession of *authentic* information on the subject, would give it to the world, through the channel of the *Morning Chronicle*. Everybody who has a heart must feel it interested in their unhappy catastrophe. Who were the ladies? Were they married or single? Were they mothers or daughters? These are the questions asked by everyone, still hoping the information not in all points true, and that the inhuman caffrees [*sic*], dragged them dead, not

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<sup>15</sup> The paper, in what might be a hint toward the factual accuracy of its reporting (or the unreliability of reporting news from the colonies in the eighteenth century in general), reports that the *Grosvenor* ran aground "on or about the 10<sup>th</sup> of October." The ship actually went down on August 4, 1782.

living, to their diabolical haunts. Some of the male passengers, it seems, remained alive. How can this be possible? Could an Englishman, *whilst he lived*, suffer such a fate to befall his countrywomen?

This concerned woman's letter highlights both the expectations that an Englishman would protect a woman who travelled with him at all costs, and that men left in Africa would somehow (like Robinson Crusoe) be able to fend for themselves. In the original article, no mention is made of the women at all – the “caffres” come down upon the “people,” – but it is clear here that this story was interpreted as suggesting that European *women* were the targets of this assault. It is also clear that, at the very least, this “female correspondent” lived in fear that the Bantus would assault the white women, and her fear of this is so powerful that she explicitly hopes that the women only became targets of cannibalism and death, not rape.

By July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1783, almost a year after the wreck, a clearer, more ‘accurate’ report appears in the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*. This report is based on the testimony of the four survivors who had been rescued and transported to the Cape of Good Hope. The men who were questioned – four repatriated sailors – reported that immediately after the ship was wrecked, “the inhabitants [of the island] flocked from the coast, and stripping them all, selected from the women, the wife of the chief officer, whom they carried off. This unfortunate Lady, was at that time with child.” Rather than focusing on the conjecture that surrounds the wreck for a moment, we turn to the truth: the inhabitants of the island did *not*, in the accounts gathered from the 18 surviving castaways who chose not to return to England, immediately carry off Mrs. Logie, but she, like the fictional female castaways studied in this chapter, somehow comes to represent everything that could happen when a woman is left alone in a

space not inhabited by so-called “civilized” British men. Taylor writes that reports from various parties indicate that, though there exists a “compelling refutation of the reports that none of the *Grosvenor* females survived, English society saw theirs as a fate worse than death, and out of kindness wished them dead” (221). Wished them dead? Likely. Wished them rescued? Not a chance. If these women were to return to European society, their countrymen and women would have to face and acknowledge the horrors of their experience. Still more difficult to deal with would be the constant reminder of the transgressions they had (unwillingly) committed: mixed-race children.

The fascination with the fate of Mrs. Logie continued for years, and the final rescue operation – in 1790 – capitalized on continuing fears about her fate. Taylor recounts this operation with notes from, among other sources, the journals of Jacob Van Reenen, who headed the expedition. After landing on the coast of South Africa and searching for the women for weeks, Van Reenen’s advance search party, all on horseback, “came down from a ridge to a settlement of about a hundred thatch huts set above the Umgazana River” (218). The inhabitants of this community, according to Van Reenen, were clearly descendants from “whites and also from yellow slaves and Bengalese” (218). Van Reenen’s journal describes the scene: “there also, in the clearing, were three white women...and, it was said, a cry of rejoicing went up from this strange tribe at the sight of white men on horseback: ‘our fathers are come!’” (218). Van Reenen told these women that he would come back for them and their children when his mission was finished, but he never did. The Dutch government, apparently overwhelmed by the large numbers of children that had sprung out of the relationships the white women had with the Bantus, reneged on its promise (218). Whatever anxieties these



women came to embody and represent, Van Reenen, along with the Dutch and the English governments, clearly believed that integrating them into white society would be problematic. Van Reenen wrote that he offered to take the white women away with him right away, but did not have the space to take all their children. The women refused to go along alone (218).

By 1792, Taylor reports that the *Calcutta Gazette* declares of the *Grosvenor* that “not the smallest vestige of her crew or passengers now exist” and claims that “Mrs. Logie, the first mate’s wife, who lived with one of the black Princes by whom she had several children, was also dead. This unfortunate lady had the additional misfortune to survive for a few years all her ship-mates” (120). On the heels of a generation of novels like Richardson’s *Clarissa* and female-centered conduct books, the maintenance of female “virtue” in the face of what Robert Shoemaker refers to as “aggressive male sexuality” became paramount (40). As a gentlewoman, Mrs. Logie’s misfortune is not only that her virtue was destroyed after the shipwreck, but also that she became so much fodder for British propaganda about female sexuality and suitability of women for travel.

It has long been argued that Defoe relied on Woodes Rogers’s *A Cruising Voyage round the World* and William Dampier’s *A New Voyage Around the World* – including their depictions of the discovery and rescue of Alexander Selkirk – as sources for *Robinson Crusoe*. Rogers’s narration of the ‘discovery’ of Selkirk brings to light anxieties about how a castaway might (or might not) maintain his or her level of civilization and refinement when removed from European society. Rogers writes that, after sending some crew in a boat on shore to collect food and water, the boat returned to the ship with an “abundance of Craw-fish [and] with a man cloth’d in Goat-skins, who look’d wilder than the first owners of them” (125). The

equation of the European man with a beast here further draws our attention to the danger of alienation from civilization. Rogers notes that “his name was Alexander Selkirk, a Scotch man” who had been “on the island four years and four months, being left there by Capt. Stradling in the Cinque-Ports” (125). Rogers tells us that Selkirk chose to stay on the island after a “difference betwixt him and his Captain; which together with the ship being leaky, made him willing rather to stay here, than go along with him” (125). Rogers describes Selkirk’s life, his supplies, and his diet, and then says:

he soon wore out all his shoes and clothes by running through the woods; and at last being forc’d to shift without them, his feet became so hard, that he run everywhere without Annoyance: and it was some time before he could wear Shoes after we found him; for not being used to any so long, his feet swell’d when he came first to wear ’em again. (128)

While on the island, Selkirk “made himself a coat and cap of goat skins, which he stitch’d together with little thongs of the same...he had on his last shirt when we found him in the island” (128). Though an eighteenth-century audience would have been shocked by Selkirk’s appearance, what Rogers writes next would have been a matter of utmost concern. He declares that “at his first coming on board us, he had so much forgot his language for want of use that we could scarce understand him, for he seemed to speak his words by halves” (129). That Selkirk, after merely four years, had lost the capacity to speak the very language that separated Englishmen from the beasts that surrounded them was a sign of his degeneration. Felicity Nussbaum argues that, “speech was believed to distinguish man from animal, the civilized from the savage” (*Limits of the Human* 43). To make matters worse, when he finally returned to

England, Selkirk reportedly “lived to regret being rescued, and was given to staring at the sea and lamenting ‘Oh, my beloved island! I wish I had never left thee!’” (Taylor 205).

In the same vein as Selkirk’s story, Stephen Taylor has documented the story of an old Portugese who was found by Dutch seamen along [the coast of Africa] in 1689 but refused to leave. They reported ‘he had been circumcised, and had a wife, children, cattle and land, he spoke only the African language, having forgotten everything, his God included’. (203)

Though these are isolated incidents, and though it is impossible to know how many men and women there were who were living like Selkirk and the Portuguese man, these “real life” narratives suggests that fears about the possibility that an English person could degenerate until he lost his very capacity for speech were prominent in discussions of travel.

Unca, Zelia, Hannah: Preservers of Virtue

There are moments in *The Female American*, *Zelia in the Desert*, and *Hannah Hewit* where it seems as if the female castaway is about to fall into the same trap as Johanna Anderson and either choose, or be forced, into ‘criminal commerce’ with a ‘savage.’ In these cases, however, each woman is clearly more terrified of her encounters with English or European men than she is by any ‘savage’ element that may exist. In a moment that Artur Blaim has noted encapsulates some of the dangers of a deserted island, Hannah Hewit is “surprised by a monstrous large baboon” that tries to attack her (102). Fearing that the baboon, with its man-like traits, is going to kill her, Hannah tries to fight it off. During the struggle, this baboon “[catches] hold” of Hannah, and it is “only with great difficulty” that she shakes him off (II.213). He leaves her, but then quickly returns, and the language that is used to describe this

second attack evokes the threat of rape. She says that he bears a “striking resemblance” to the “pert addresses of a coxcomb” and that his antics would be humorous if the monkey had not grown “bolder and bolder” and “impudently advanced” toward her (II.213). Dror Wahrman writes that discourse about humans and animals in the eighteenth century suggested that the difference between the two groups was fluid enough for thinkers to believe that the two groups could reproduce together. Curiously enough, several of these scholars suggested that there were “rumors of sexual intercourse between apes and Negroes” (Wahrman 130). Wahrman quotes at length from Edward Long, but then goes on to mention that both Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Jonathan Swift were intrigued by this possibility enough to address it directly. Montagu declares in her *Turkish Embassy Letters* that she “could not help but think there had been some ancient alliances” between Africans and apes; Jonathan Swift, according to Wahrman, “capitalized on the titillation of such imaginary unions” (134-5) in the scene in *Gulliver’s Travels* where Gulliver is attacked by the half-human, half-animal Yahoo (134-5). Eighteenth-century discourse on the state of man suggested, then, that women were not just susceptible to unnaturally lustful thoughts in the torrid zones, but could succumb to the power of those thoughts and satisfy themselves with any creature who even remotely resembled a man.

Though Carl Thompson has written that the scene with the baboon is a “displacement of the sexual and racial anxieties inspired by the *Grosvenor* wreck,” I want to expand on Thompson’s argument to suggest that, though it is likely that Dibdin included this scene partly to evoke the dangers of an unexplored space to an undefended person (whether a woman or not), there is more to Hewit’s experience than this. Hewit’s language while describing this attack forces us to consider not just the danger that the baboon himself poses to her, but also

the danger posed by the “pert addresses of a coxcomb” (II.213). This moment mirrors other situations in which the young, unprotected literary heroine finds her body and her reputation threatened by a rakish man. Indeed, this scene echoes attacks on heroines like Haywood’s Betsy Thoughtless, Aubin’s Charlotta du Pont, Richardson’s Pamela, and, more specifically, Burney’s *Evelina*. In this last text, the young heroine is approached at Vauxhall by a group of gentlemen, “apparently very riotous” who “seemed to rush suddenly from behind some trees” (237).

*Evelina* describes this scene as a moment when one of the ‘gentlemen’ “seized hold of me, and said I was a pretty little creature” (238). The connection between *Evelina*’s experiences and Hewit’s is telling: man, not beast, threatens them both, and it is the figure who resembles the coxcomb – the Englishman, not the beast or ‘native’ – who is accused of being the source of this danger.

The moments when Unca Eliza most fears for her own bodily integrity come not when she encounters the hermit who dies shortly after the two meet, and not when she encounters the Native Americans, but rather when she encounters a group of Englishmen who come onto her island to take on water for their ship. Unca Eliza is briefly afraid of the thought of encountering the Native Americans that the hermit’s diary warns her about, and she contemplates hiding from them as the hermit has advised, but she quickly comes up with a plan that will ensure her safety. Instead of living in fear of them, she chooses to disguise herself first as their idol and then as a prophet. This plan assuages two anxieties about the female castaway at once. First, it ensures that the Native Americans will not harm Unca Eliza because she pretends to be the sun god they worship, and secondly, she presents a way to live safely with the

community on the next island, thus neutralizing any fear that isolation will cause her to go mad (67).

Winkfield defends herself from any possible attack on the part of the Native American by hiding herself inside their idol and assuming a divine persona. Unca describes the idol as being “clad in a long robe or vest...girt about the waist as with a girdle, and on each breast gathered to a point, fastened as it were, with a button, the neck and the bosom quite [bare] like the manner of a woman” (78). First she enters into this idol to speak to the Native Americans, then she instructs them to come back the next day, in order to receive her as a priest. For that meeting, Unca Eliza appears to them dressed in such a way that they cannot help but associate her with the idol. She dons priestly garments she finds buried in tunnels below the idol, and clothes herself in these robes, adorned with a selection of jewels she found with them. In order to appear as much like the idol as possible, she,

in looking over the gold rings...found one which was set round with precious stones, with a very large one in the middle, which shone with a luster equal to that on top of the gown...this [she] put on [her] fingers, and two of the richest bracelets, beset with precious stones, on each of [her] arms. (88)

By creating a costume that effectively mimics the one the idol is sporting, Unca Eliza neutralizes the risk that the Native Americans will attack her; she essentially fools them into believing that she is divine, and will later use this assumption on their part to maintain her safety in their community.

Jessica Munns and Penny Richards have commented that “bodies and clothes endlessly redefine each other to forge, adapt, adopt – and deny – varieties of selfhood” (9). Unca Eliza

uses the power that costumes often have to forge a relationship of dominance and fear with the Native Americans. By doing this, she essentially negates the possibility that they could harm her, because she implicitly suggests that to do so would bring about divine retribution.

This idol-impersonation escapade ends with the Native Americans greeting her with “loud shouts and gestures” and by “bow[ing] their bodies three times, to the very earth” (94). In a scene that mimics Friday’s placement of Crusoe’s foot on his head, Unca Eliza is not only able to save herself from violence, but is also able to get an entire country to submit to her will. After an earthquake destroys the home the hermit leaves for her, Unca Eliza fears that she will have to live in a series of tombs under the idol to keep from being exposed to the elements and concludes instead that she must live with the Native Americans. Worried that they “might...think it necessary and right to destroy one who should dare deny the deity of the sun and expose the absurdity of their religion” (111), Unca pushes her plan one step further. In order to keep herself safe, she speaks from the idol and tells the Native Americans that “a person shall come to you, like yourselves, and that you may be the less fearful and suspicious, that person shall be a woman, and live among you as you do” (111). In this case, it is the emphasis on her femininity, the lack of threat that *she* poses to *them* that not only keeps her safe, but allows her to take up a role as missionary on the island. From inside the idol, she declares that a woman will come to them with “the knowledge of the true God, and the way to be happy forever” (111). In this case, it is not only the woman who is safest on the island, and the woman who can get an entire nation to submit to her, but one who can most effectively convert the Native Americans to Christianity. In fact, her role as Christ-figure to the Native Americans suggests that women are not only able to adopt a life of missionary work, but can take up these

roles without male supervision or help. Here, where the male hermit has failed to convert the Native Americans to Christianity, a woman has succeeded and, as a consequence, has developed a peaceful relationship with the [about to be] colonized community.

Unca does wind up in a bit of a miscommunication with the Native Americans as a result of her dress, but this inability to communicate her ideas without confusing the Native Americans is not a failure of her missionary goals, but rather a mere delay in their achievement, and one that further ensures her safety:

it was easy to discover, that they conceived me more than a mere mortal. However, I did not think it my duty, any more than my interest, to undeceive them, as this opinion secured to me that respect and authority which were necessary for me to preserve, in order to carry on the great work among them, in which I was engaged.

(119)

Using the divinity she appears to embody to the Native Americans, Unca protects herself by manipulating them to believe that to hurt her would bring about some kind of divine penalty.

Unca Eliza manages to neutralize the threat that the Native Americans may have posed to her, but, like Hannah Hewit, she does have a moment in which she faces a significant threat from people she meets on the island. In a reversal of the threat that the foreign 'savage' poses to a woman, Unca Eliza is most afraid during her encounter with English sailors who come on shore to restock their ship. Seeing the ship, Unca Eliza climbs into the idol to try to discover the nationality of the men, and quickly establishes "that they were European, and as well as I could conjecture at the distance they were from me, Englishmen" (121). Faced with a shipload of her countrymen, it stands to reason that Unca Eliza would be excited to return to England,



or to at least send word to her family that she is alive and well. Instead, she is terrified of the violence that the European men pose to the English woman. On top of her terror for herself, she is also afraid for the “poor Indians” (121) who she knows are returning to the small island to pick her up. She worries that they will be taken as slaves or captured and killed, but implicit in her fear for them is a fear for herself as well. In England, her mixed-race heritage might make her a curiosity. Exposed to the English sailors on the island, however, it marks her as a target for sexual predation and slavery.

Clearly aware of the mercantile nature of sea journeys and the sexual violence often posed to Native American women (and, of course, British women) by British sailors, Unca Eliza approaches the sailors with great caution. She again disguises herself, this time wearing her priestly garments in such a way as to give off the impression of ghostliness and uses this disguise to scare the sailors. Kristianne Vacarro has argued that, “Unca’s peculiar performance here instills mass confusion into the minds of its audience, which consists of John, his comrade Charles, and the sailors” (147) and in this case, Unca Eliza acknowledges that to confuse the sailors is the safest way to save herself, and her Native American friends, from slavery and sexual violence.

Zelia, too, has a moment when a European man threatens her safety. After Nina, her friend and fellow shipwreck victim, dies, the hermit they discovered living on the island tries to prepare Zelia for his own rapidly approaching death. Trying to convince the hermit that death is not stalking him, Zelia tells him that she might die first, and that “you also ought to wish it, for my happiness, if you love me” (86). The response she gets surprises her and reflects moments in other texts where women are put in danger because of the strength of male desire

for them. The hermit replies, “if I love you, adorable girl!” and takes the frightened Zelia into his arms with “an air of eagerness and concern” which surprises Zelia to a “degree of terror” (86). Though she tells her readers that she knows “not why” she was terrified, in her denial of fear, she confesses its source. She tells us that she is “far from imagining anything criminal in the action of this good man” but her denial that the hermit was doing something “criminal” clearly indicates that she momentarily considered it a possibility. She then declares to her reader that, despite her professed lack of doubt about the hermit’s intentions, “I determined however to be more reserved in the future” and then admits that she “envie[s] the fate of my poor friend [the dead Nina] when I considered to what dangers I was exposed” (88) on the island. Even though she protests that the old man is nothing but kind to her, it is clear that as a woman alone, unprotected except for a single man who has passionate feelings for her, she believes herself to be in danger. In an echo of the scene in which Hannah Hewit is grabbed by the baboon who behaves like a coxcomb, the man that ‘takes her into his arms’ so eagerly is linked with the threat of uncontrolled passion and rape. That this man represents not the ‘savagery’ of the island, but rather the civilization of Europe, is intriguing. That he poses a threat to Zelia’s safety on an island he has carefully modeled so closely after Europe is a key signal that the ‘civilized’ man continues to threaten the unprotected woman as frequently, and as seriously, as any ‘savage’ element.

Each of these texts clearly engages with the problems of female travel as presented in *The Life...of John Daniel* and the rhetoric around the fate of Lydia Logie, but, perhaps surprisingly, what these texts reveal is that the threat of sexual violence feared by these women comes from European, rather than ‘savage,’ men. These moments of racial and social reversal

suggest that sexual violence against women in the metropole is a deeper and much more pervasive threat than any posed to women overseas, while at the same time allowing the female castaway to set herself up in opposition to ideas of the helpless heroine who needs to be confined to the domestic space for protection. These female castaways not only avoid the same threats that heroines like Pamela, Clarissa and Evelina face, but they are also uniquely able to function outside the domestic sphere.

#### A Failure of Masculinity...again

Much like the female captives in the fiction of Aubin and Haywood, not only do the female castaways in these texts face danger from the uncontrolled passions of European men, but they also travel primarily as the result of something a man in their lives has caused to happen. Unca Eliza is marooned on her island because she refuses to make a deal with the captain of the ship on which she travels. She goes into great detail about this incident, and we cannot escape the fact that this scene mirrors the many forced marriage scenes with which the eighteenth-century reader would be familiar. Unca Eliza tells us that “the captain, willing to lose no time, began to talk to me very freely about marriage. He did not indeed solicit me for himself; but he made strong courtship for his son” (53). Unca Eliza declares that, at first, she “answered him with good humor, and told him I hope he would let me see his son before I determined to have him” but she very quickly realizes that the captain is quite serious about his threats (53-4). She declares that she “soon found that he was too much in earnest, and I too much in his power” when the captain gives her an ultimatum: “if [she] would not immediately sign a bond to marry his son on [their] arrival in England, or forfeit thirty thousand pounds, [she] should neither see England, nor return to [her] plantation” (54). It becomes clear in her

interactions with the captain that the education she had in England, one that included “the female parts” of life, has failed to prepare her for a life without the protection most commonly given to an unmarried woman of her class. Indeed, she is completely without the “fathers, brothers, mothers and ministers” who supposedly “protected [women] from such nonsense” as having to travel at sea in the first place (Blackwell 8). She admits that she “did not know law enough then, or else I might have given the bond and so have avoided the distress that my refusal occasioned, as in equity I might have been released from my penalty” (54). An education atypical for women in England that included “Greek and Latin languages, and [lessons in] other polite literatures” failed to include a class on avoiding a forced marriage (50). Left with few options, Unca Eliza refuses to marry the son or forfeit her inheritance, and is marooned by the captain. One wonders, as Mary Wollstonecraft would a generation later, if a more practical education, aligned with the needs of women, might have prevented Unca Eliza’s problems in the first place.

Zelia’s situation is very much the same. Her parents, in their attempts to enlarge their trading business, send her to live with her grandmother who, as it turns out, wants to gain access to the girl’s fortune by forcing a marriage between Zelia and her nephew. We are told that “being unwilling to expose [her] to the dangers” of the voyage, Zelia’s parents unwittingly expose her to the dangers of a mercenary marriage and the hint of a kidnap plot instead. After her mother’s death, her father returns to England, but Zelia tells us that he “thought of nothing but coming to live in his own country, where he hoped to receive greater consolation...he did not, however, think it necessary...to acquaint me with his intentions” because he was “happy to think I was with so sensible and tender a relation” (3). Zelia, in love with M. D’ermancour and

believing the nephew to be “altogether insupportable,” writes to her father, who is forced to rescue the girl in the middle of the night “in order to avoid everything that can be thought of, to ruin our project” (26). It is during this escape – one that would have been utterly unnecessary if her father had called her home on his return – that she is shipwrecked: another victim of both an unthinking father and a forced marriage.

Hannah Hewit’s situation is a little bit different – she is already married when she goes to sea – but her downfall comes at the hands of her brother who, with the rejected suitor Mr. Sourby, conspire to drive her into bankruptcy and ruin her reputation. Hewit tells us that, after she and her husband are bankrupted, she discovers upon investigation that their financial troubles were all orchestrated by the “villain Sourby, and my unnatural brother the lawyer” (II.34). Upon further investigation, Hannah discovers that her brother and Sourby “long, regularly and systematically determined upon...some diabolical scheme to fatten themselves at the expense of our industry” (II.36). Intent on succeeding in their plan, Sourby convinces Hannah’s husband that she is carrying an illegitimate child, and he leaves her to join the Bengal Army. She pursues him, and during her voyage she is inserted into the narrative of the wreck of the *Grosvenor*. It is on the march across the African interior that she encounters Sourby, who, having been transported for committing fraud with her brother, is living as the mysterious “Trout,” a man who has only one intention once he spots Hannah amongst the castaways: to make her his wife. Trout hires two “Caffres” to kidnap her from the group (here, Hewit is modeled on the real-life Lydia Logie, thus allowing Dibdin to capitalize on the anxieties about what happened to the woman, while, eventually, allaying these anxieties by creating a super-castaway in Hewit). He tells her that “he never loved any woman” but Hannah, and informs

her that his plan is for her to “escape with him to Madagascar, where he had no doubt but [they] should get very safe, [and] he would there marry me” (153). She has no choice but to go with him, but this kidnapping is fortunately short-lived: when Sourby tries to kill the man helping him row Hannah across the ocean in a small boat, he is thrown off balance, falls into the sea, and is eaten by a shark. Before his death, however, Sourby reports that *he* has orchestrated the upcoming attack on, and demise of, the rest of the castaways, and that he has specifically engineered the attack so that, after it is over, “a proposal would be made for the men to take Caffre wives, and the women Caffre husbands, which if any refused to do, they would be killed and eaten” (153). This most heinous of incidents, one which captured the imagination of much of England, was orchestrated, in Dibdin’s interpretation, by an Englishman.

So-called ‘civilized’ members of a society that purports to hold the virtue of women in high esteem betray all of the women in these texts, and send them unprotected onto the high seas. These women, however, are not condemned to death by their shipwrecks; island life allows them to flourish in ways they did not, and could not, at home. Because of the ill-preparation, thoughtlessness, or irresponsible behavior of their fathers, or the lust of men for their persons or riches, the female castaway is, in fact, safer alone on an island than she is in British culture. Jeannine Blackwell has written of the German female castaway that “the effect of her trip is a gradual loosening of the bonds of the European social code” (12). The loosening of these bonds allows for a kind of re-socialization within a less patriarchal, more liberating framework, but one in which the female castaway ultimately remains loyal to norms of British civility and aids in the spread of that civility overseas.

## Madness and Civilization

The female castaways depicted in these texts are in situations where their sanity is sometimes at issue (as it often the case for castaways). Of Crusoe, Weaver-Hightower suggests: “he, like other castaways, seems to fear being *infected* by the island into savagery or madness, a fear enhanced by a lack of European community to help reinforce his...‘civilized’ habitus” (137). Infection, I suggest, is not necessarily a problem here: fever was the primary symptom of the necessary ‘seasoning’ process most travelers and castaways faced. The madness that could arise out of that fever (like the kind, for example, Charles Meryon believed Hester Stanhope succumbed to), however, is an anxiety that is not manifested in the female castaway.

Instead of resulting in a renunciation of European civilization (as it did in the case of Hester Stanhope), each of the women in these narratives emerge from their illnesses with a new resolve to live as well as they can, and, as a result, exhibit behaviors that increasingly highlight their connections to European society. That these moments echo the one faced by Crusoe is, in essence, exactly the point. Though female castaways manifest their European allegiances in many ways differently than Crusoe, here they seem to purposely echo Defoe’s text by aligning themselves and their stories with the novelistic tradition begun by Defoe. Unlike Defoe’s text, however, rather than upholding every possible convention of British society in the same way that Crusoe does, these women moderate their allegiance to British culture in order to survive, while at the same time managing to maintain the markers of British civility.

Unca Eliza, for instance, describes the moment when she, over-run with anxiety about her fate, develops a “violent fever, attended with a delirium” (66). She writes that she “raved, [she] cried, [she] laughed by turns” and, during this episode, she behaves in a way that is

decidedly uncivilized. She tells us that she is “obliged to crawl upon [her] hands and feet” to get out of her own house, and when she finally manages to do this, thirst drives her to a decidedly bestial moment: she is forced to suck the milk directly from the teats of a “she-goat,” as if she were the beast’s child (67). Fortunately, she recovers and vows to “fortify [her] heart [and] learn patience and resignation to the dispensations of providence” because, once her fever passes, she realizes that “submission or hope, one or both, were ever in a less or greater degree my solace” (71). Her fever, despite forcing her into a vaguely animalistic act linked to the madness that island life is said to breed, actually ends with her resolve to be much more careful to guard herself from the more hazardous pitfalls of life in the tropics.

Zelia’s moment of madness results in a state of hallucination. In a moment when she says she is “more than ever taken” with thoughts of death and her immanent demise, she hears a noise in her house, and in a fit of fear, grabs Ninette and leaps out of the window. The two spend the night in the forest, barely clothed, in the pouring rain, because Zelia is unable to see any way in which the noises are not being made by someone else on an island she believes is uninhabited. The next day, she manages to convince herself that the noises have been caused by M. D’Ermancour, whom she thinks is dead, coming to rescue her. Though she feels that her “life seemed going from” her, she returns to the house, only to find that the noises were coming from a “kind of antelope” who, “driven by the rain and the storm, and the pressing necessity of bringing forth her young ones, had forced herself into the house” (124). In this reversal of the nature/civilization binary, it is Zelia, the European woman, who is forced to care for her young in the woods during a rainstorm, while the antelope – a beast – seeks refuge in her home, the bastion of European civility on her island. This moment, however, is fleeting, and Zelia begins



slowly to regain her powers of reason. Once the illness brought on by the night in the rain abates, she finds herself filled with a new resolve: “I was as much pleased to find myself at home again in quiet, as if I had actually overcome all those dangers of which I had been in dread some hours before. My house appeared to me as a palace, and an inaccessible fortress” (125). She, too, begins to revive herself, finally, “more than ever sensible of the happiness I had met with in so desert a place,” she regains control of her emotions. After this, she is able to make her house into the ‘inaccessible fortress’ that emerging ideas about domesticity demanded it should be.

The same is true for Hannah Hewit. She falls into a “most violent fever...and feeling every symptom of an approaching delirium,” she takes an “emetic” which is made from something she finds on the island that resembles an eggplant. Unfortunately, she has actually concocted this mixture out of something called a ‘mad apple,’ which causes her to fall into a violent trance. Following her recovery from the fever and ensuing poisoning, she, like Unca Eliza and Zelia, resolves to live with the: “humility... sanctity... confidence...fortitude...and gratitude” most properly linked with the sentimental heroine than with any lasting effects of her ‘island fever’ (234). Curiously, it is in attempting to cure herself through means she learned in England that she is almost killed. That she mistook the ‘mad apple’ for the eggplant also suggests that she, unlike Selkirk or the white creole, has not adapted to island culture at all, but, rather like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu before her, her body physically rejects the very possibility of doing so. Her madness, then, comes from poison that she misinterpreted as English custom, and she comes to accept that she can view the island as a place where she can gather new knowledge and experience of the world, rather than relying on English customs that no longer seem useful to her.

Though these fevers seem, on the surface, to be threats the castaways cannot control, each serves to strengthen the resolve of the castaway to survive while at the same time prompting her to fight the urge to transculturate to island life. By embracing the resources of the island while remaining steadfast in their markers of European civility, the women are uniquely able to engage with, but not in, island life.

### Class in Question

Because, as Jeannine Blackwell has pointed out, these castaways are not the “usual” women who took to the seas, we must consider the ways their upper-middle-class status operates in these texts. Unca Eliza’s father was a merchant and a trader in North America, Zelia’s father was a merchant, and Hannah Hewit made her vast fortune off sales of her inventions and overseas trade. Even though, as Shoemaker, Vickery and others point out, upper-middle class values were constructed as the most normative in British society, these texts make clear that class restrictions, and the impropriety of class mixing, has left Unca Eliza and Zelia without the skills that they might need to flourish on the island. Hannah, however, because she has been part of the lower classes, has been able to gain practical skills that help her survive on the island.

The three women are placed in conditions on the island to which they would normally be unaccustomed. Shoemaker notes that, “when the family could afford it, many wives ceased paid working” but notes that “wives, or the servants they supervised, did the vast majority of the housework, including virtually all of the cleaning, shopping and cooking” (116). Because Unca Eliza, Zelia and Hannah were certainly wealthy enough to benefit from the “vast increase in the use of female domestic servants” in the period (119), the three women, while responsible

for housework and domestic chores, would have, in practice, done little of either. When they arrive on their islands, however, they arrive without servants, housekeepers, or other domestic help.

As a result, each woman does, when necessary, cross class boundaries to perform duties that are well beneath her social standing, and likewise outside of her field of experience. Though these chores technically disrupt the stability of the English class system, this transgression is not only fleeting, but also necessary for survival. As a woman who has had the opportunity to learn classical languages, Unca Eliza is clearly forced to act outside her normal class proscriptions when she needs to kill a goat for food. She says that the “thought of killing shocked me” (a sign that she has turned away from the ‘savage’ roots of her mother to the English ‘civility’ of her father), tells us that she is “afraid to kill” the goat, and does so “with great uneasiness” (63). Even more importantly, she reflects on the difficult task of skinning and butchering the goat, and then has to force herself to do it, “though in a very bungling manner” (63). The only way for her to survive is to perform duties normally associated with women of the lower classes, which she performs poorly. Here, her education has not only lacked instruction in marriage law, it also lacks lessons in self-sufficiency. Unca Eliza suffers from her own upbringing, and, unlike Hannah Hewit, for example, she has not been able to benefit from the lives of “other” kinds of women. Though Weaver-Hightower suggests that, in these moments, the female castaway is “temporarily masculinized” and must “act manly in order to survive” (50), these activities are not necessarily ‘manly,’ but are rather class-based. Her hesitancy and lack of skill in performing this task marks a hesitancy to transgress the markers of her *class* rather than her gender, and a sign that despite the fleeting nature of wealth and the

hazards that a wealthy woman might have faced (including the loss, or theft, of her fortune by the men charged with protecting her), Unca Eliza has not been taught any skills, and has not had the opportunity to learn any skills, that might help her guarantee her survival if the worst should happen. Island life, instead of threatening the civility of these female travelers, allows them to gain the skills necessary to live outside the relatively narrow confines of domestic life. To kill and skin an animal in the way that Unca Eliza does is much more familiar to the Native American tribe from whom she is partially descended and whom she attempts to civilize later in the text. By resisting this job, and by suggesting that she is not skilled at performing this task, Unca Eliza reminds us once again that she is still quintessentially European, and has not succumbed to the degenerating influences of the island.

The same is true for Zelia in a number of senses. She, like Unca Eliza, is forced after the death of the hermit to perform acts of butchery that are not consistent with her social class. She tells us that “milk [from goats] of which I was very fond, disagreed with me when I made it my principal food; and at the end of five or six months, I was concerned to find it necessary for me to change my diet” (II.105). Thankfully, her hermit, M. de Mericourt, has left her with a “poultry yard” to which she turns, but this move disturbs her and reveals to us the ways in which she has attempted to maintain the ideals of civilization upheld by upper-middle-class Britons. She tells us that she “could not bear the thought of killing with my own hands these poor animals which I had nursed and brought up, therefore it was a long time before I could determine on so inhuman an act” (II.105-6). Her health depends on her butchering the chickens for food, but she removes herself as far from actually having to kill the animals as she can. She writes that she “went one morning into the poultry-yard, and resolved to conquer my

repugnance, as the effect might prove fatal to me” (II.106) and manages to build a trap to strangle the chickens for her. She tells us that she repeats this “artful piece of deceit” several times (II.106). Like Unca Eliza, Zelia lacks the ability to fend for herself, and island life gives her the chance to act out against proscriptions on her behavior and learn the skills necessary to survive on her own.

Final proof that Zelia still values the cultural norms she was raised with comes when she and M. D’Ermancour are reunited on the island. In a series of dramatic speeches that culminate in the offering of their hearts to each other, they decide to move into the hermit’s house together. After spending the night reading Zelia’s record of her time on the island, M. D’Ermancour comes to her “in the morning, and repeat[s] to [her] with rapture all that was most flattering to him in the papers that he had been reading” (II.69). Zelia, “disconcerted at the smallest expression of love,” sends him away, and declares that she is “more than ever afraid to discover to him the smallest weakness” about her feelings, and feels it necessary to “accustom [herself] to put on an air of reserve and resolution, which might guard [her] from all [she] had to fear in so intimate a society” (II.70). Here, once again, because of the strength of male feeling for her, Zelia becomes the quintessential pursued heroine charged with guarding her virtue at all costs. Zelia acknowledges the cultural constraints she is under, and to which she remains committed, when she asks “must I deprive myself of the pleasure of telling my lover he was dear to me?” (II.178) even when no one is there to judge her. After some time, M. D’Ermancour tells his servant Jerome that he can no longer stand being with Zelia without being married to her, and says that he “must fly from her: [he] must go and confine [himself] in the most retired part of the forest, and there wait for the termination of a wretched life” (III.36). That this act draws

attention to the irrepressibility of some forms of male lust is important, especially considering that he feels that he must hide from Zelia if his desires are not to be fulfilled. The solution the pair come up with is to recite marriage vows to each other, thus establishing a social custom that mirrors the ones at home in a place far removed from society.

For Hewit, class allegiance is an equally important issue, but as a woman born of the lower classes and raised to upper-middle-class status through hard work, Hewit has the benefit of a degree of knowledge the other women do not have. She immediately sees the use and value of the contents of a ship that runs aground after a violent storm. She notes that a “large part of her cargo yet remained on board” (II.190) and begins to retrieve goods from this ship. She finds the bodies of three women and seven men, including a “gentleman and a lady I found in each other’s arms” whom she identifies as M. and Mme. D’Oliviere, a French couple on their way home from Benares (II.190). She performs a sort of burial for these men and women in the hull of the ship, and then begins to contemplate what to do with the goods she finds. This discovery helps Hewit maintain, or rather return to, the boundaries of European civilization. She is able to shed the “strange weeds” that she has carefully “knit with cotton in the nature of knitting a stocking” as well as an outfit that she describes as a “harlequin’s jacket and trousers” for “some night clothes of Madame D’Oliviere” (II.190, II.247). This move, of course, allows Hewit to reconstruct herself as a woman who gladly adheres to the dress codes of her gender when they are available. The next day, as she removes goods from the ship, she begins to catalogue the “cordials, sweetmeats, spices, and almost every delicacy that the Eastern world affords” that make up the ship’s cargo (II.250). She also finds the chests belonging to the carpenter and the doctor, “several cases of instruments for the purposes of navigation...and medicines and physical

books, together with the chirguical instruments” (II.251). The contents of these chests further help Hewit to maintain her class allegiance, each are the tools of a professional who likely enjoys a comfortable upper-middle-class life. In order to remove goods from the ship, she demonstrates the resourcefulness of a woman who has had to manage a life outside the boundaries of upper-middle class comfort, thus mirroring the moments when Unca Eliza and Zelia badly employ tools of the lower classes. Hannah erects a winch-like device that “is so extremely well known to seamen, and to them it will not seem extraordinary that I should be able to hoist and lower ten times the weight that I could have managed by my proper strength” (II.254). This *would* be extraordinary for a woman accustomed to a home-based lifestyle, but Hewit’s knowledge of public life gained as a shopkeeper, and her access to the trades of the lower classes, makes it much easier for her to survive than the other women by using goods from the ship to construct a home. She tells us that “I was determined to change my place of abode for I had no doubt but living within the rock had been in a great measure the cause of the difficult illnesses I had been inflicted with” (II.49) and builds a house by combining her knowledge of architecture, science, brick making and geography with her maternal skills (in caring for her pet lion, Leo, who helps with the construction). Hewit does these things, however, in order to be able to better establish herself according to the customs of her upper-middle-class lifestyle. In one of the text’s most bizarre twists, she even seems to sense that her domestic arrangements on the island require a male figure, and using the goods and tools from the ship, manages to construct a life-like automaton as a companion. She even manages to program it to say, “I love you, Hannah!” (II.103) in an attempt to construct a complete, domestic household, replete with a loving husband.

The introduction of Leo the lion in this text provides some important insight about the colonial space and its safety. Hewit encounters Leo as a young cub whose mother has been killed by a baboon, and keeps him as a pet. He, like Zelia's chickens, comes to symbolize Hewit's own children: she feeds him milk, makes sure that he has meat to eat when he needs it, and gives him shelter. Though he fills the role of child, and in concert with the automaton helps her establish a domestic household on the island, Leo also helps protect Hewit in a way other 'men' fail to do. One day when they are walking on the beach, the same baboon that tried to attack her earlier and who killed Leo's mother, attacks Hannah. Leo intervenes in this fight and kills the baboon, but dies in the process. Unlike any of the men in this text, Leo steps in to act as defender of the English woman. He, unlike the men on board the *Grosvenor* or the English sailors Unca Eliza encounters, defends the Englishwoman with his life. Hannah is safer with a beast than she is with any English man.

It is clear in each instance that the female castaway has relinquished some of her English or European sensibilities, as Blackwell contends they do and English society feared they would. But each of these woman does so *not* because they are "going native" as the anxieties that were inscribed onto their bodies and discussed in the media at home suggested, but rather because, in order to allay these fears, class identities and social proscriptions are re-written to give even the upper-middle-class woman the tools to survive if the systems put in place for her protection fail. That these proscriptions *can* be so easily relaxed, transgressed, and reframed as needs require is a symbol of the ways in which women are, actually, despite their education, able to exist outside the society so intent to keep them 'safe'. The island space offers women a chance not to overthrow their feminine British identity in favor of a masculine one, or to drop their European



sensibilities in favor of those of the ‘savage,’ but rather to abandon or move beyond the needless restrictions on female circulation and travel.

In addition to this reframing, however, each woman makes clear statements against the possibility that they are, or could be, adapting to island life by refusing to identify with the animals and nature around them. Even Leo, Hewit’s lion friend, takes on attributes of an English gentleman rather than those of the beast he is. The power dynamic that comes with the female castaway’s ability to kill, train, or alter natural elements defines them as far and away more civilized than the ‘beast’ or ‘savage’ that roams Britian’s new colonies, and creates a space for women to flourish even though they are participating in activities that were thought to be improper, or dangerous, to them at home.

#### A Colony’s Birth: Domesticity to the Rescue!

Each woman uses the materials she has before her on the island in order to make a home, and each strives to create some atmosphere of domesticity. Though Unca Eliza and Zelia are shipwrecked on islands that have ‘houses’ of sorts already on them, they – like Hannah Hewit does in a more mercantile-based way – work to create their own version of a colony on their islands. Annette Kolodny, writing about American women, has argued that “women claimed the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity...they dreamed of a home and a familiar community” (xiii). Kolodny asks her readers to put aside their “ideological predispositions of late twentieth-century feminism” (iv) in order to understand that the social and historical contexts of the time. In terms of the ‘rescue’ plots in these texts, I ask my readers to do the same. Despite what we might now view as a tendency toward the formulaic, the endings of these texts need to be read in an eighteenth-century context.

Jeannine Blackwell has noted that a feature of all female castaway narratives is what she refers to as a “serious flaw in the heroine’s plot”: the rescue. She notes that, to a modern audience it “would seem as if they [female castaways] have managed quite well on their own” and need not be rescued like so many sentimental heroines before them (14). With the arrival of the rescuers – former friends or relatives – life on the island is “immediately altered to a class and sexual division of labor” that more clearly reflects those expected of women at home (15). These divisions result in the female castaway becoming “a fresh-baked romantic heroine” and Blackwell notes that the female castaway can only achieve a life outside of the strictures of English society by “breaking away from Europe [and] establishing an existence” on distant islands (15). She can, according to Blackwell, “bring it back to Europe only through the intervention of a noble man who solidifies her material gains” (17). This conclusion, however, is problematized by the fact that two out of the three heroines examined in this chapter do not return home, and the third regrets her decision.

Contrary to the argument that Blackwell puts forward that posits that the female castaway “voluntarily rejects” her “own ideal island” in order to live a life “as a wealthy, sensitive and beloved member of the nouveau riches” (17), the female castaways featured in these texts are forced into filling the role of a romantic heroine for the sake of the colonies. The only one of our castaways who returns home does not get the fairy-tale ending that Blackwell predicts. Even though Zelia returns to France, she continues to yearn for her life on the island.

April London has argued that, when Unca Eliza’s cousin John arrives on the island, she focuses on “renewal of domestic order” that founds a “religious, linguistic, and political” relinquishment of authority “in favor of a more completely satisfying domestic order” that

founds a “new vision of community” (101). Roxann Wheeler likewise suggests that, with John’s arrival, comes a moment when Unca Eliza “gives up the role of leader” (326). London and Wheeler here both note that the female castaway changes roles when she meets with her compatriots (201). Though Wheeler and London seem to read the ending of *The Female American* as a feminist betrayal in an otherwise proto-feminist text, the realities of Unca Eliza’s continuing feminist interventions are actually quite significant. Her life as a castaway grants her an almost-divine status, and certainly opens up a role for her (and in turn, posits a role for all women) in the patriarchal hierarchy of the Church of England.

Her marriage to John, conducted for propriety more than love, does, in some ways, trap her into the role of “wives and mothers” who “were meant to exert complimentary domesticating influences on the front and the colonial frontier, in order to nurture the seeds of civilization and ensure the reproduction of the national culture and stock far from home” (*Island Race* 21) that Wilson argues is typical of colonial society. It is important, however, to keep in mind that Unca maintains a significant role as a spiritual leader in the colony, and there is no doubt that her relationship with the Native Americans is one in which she is granted a significant amount of status and power not granted to women affiliated with the Church of England at home.

The arrival of M. D’Ermancour and his servant Jerome on her island forces Zelia into what appears to be the role of the sentimental heroine. She, too, surrenders her rights over the island to establish a domestic order in place of the chaos that reigned while she and M. D’Ermancour tried to live together unmarried. After their “wedding,” M. D’Ermancour takes over the tasks – keeping the garden, raising the chickens, disciplining the children – that

previously belonged to Zelia. She, in some ways, loses her authority, but, like Unca, steps into the colonizing role that only a woman can fulfill: she has several children who, though they return with her to France, frequently express their desires to return to their island some day. Once their appropriate schooling is over, they, like so many children of the colonies, will return to island life and bring with them European ideas of civility.

Hannah Hewit's adventure is cut short when her husband and a group of his male friends, including two of her brothers and her son, find her on the island. Before they arrive, Hannah has discovered that John was to be on board the ship that wrecked on her island, and she believes that he is dead. Hewit is upset when she discovers this, but manages to build a life for herself without the prospect of male companionship. He and some friends, however, stumble on the island, and Hannah reveals herself to the sailors and is instrumental in her reunion with John. When she and John reunite, along with her brothers and old friends, Hewit appears to take on the role of the sentimental heroine. She resumes her role as keeper of the domestic space. She tells us that:

my husband, my brother, my son, and Walmsley [a family friend] were all cutting out business, and planning pleasure for us all; while my sister, my niece, and Britannia [a "family friend"] were delighted to see their husbands so rationally employed, and studying what way they could make their persons and their conduct most agreeable to them. In short, we began already to find our place a little heaven upon earth, and I could plainly see the only emulation among us would be who should most endeavor to realize that idea. (III.270)

To put it plainly, all the work that Hannah has undertaken to make the island into a colonial paradise is surrendered to her husband and the other men, and Hannah, her sister, and her niece, along with Walmsley's wife [Britannia] are "delighted" to watch these things happen. Though this reads as a kind of surrender, we must keep in mind that all of the men featured in these female castaway texts arrive on islands that have already been 'civilized' and built into paradises by the women who have come before them. Even Zelia, who is wrecked on an island that has been somewhat settled by M. de Mericourt, improves on his constructions by adding gardens and expanding the house. Without these women, the islands which men take over would be wildernesses, possibly haunted by savage beasts.

What these texts suggest, then, is that though social pressures eventually seem to catch up to the heroines of these texts, it is clear that without their intervention, there would be no colonies at all. These texts, then, argue that the limited roles assigned to women as 'wives and mothers' in the colonies, as establishers of garden patches, are ones that not only limit female participation, but limit potential progress in the colonies by restricting the behaviors of its female inhabitants.

Each of these texts ends with an extreme example of geographical separation between the heroine and her homeland. In the case of Unca Eliza and Hannah, this separation turns out not only to be a benefit to the colonial drive, but also to women at home. Rather than presupposing that travel is unsafe, heroines like Unca Eliza, Hannah and Zelia suggest that by allowing women greater access to each other's lives, and by not restricting their behaviors so closely to class status, women may be able to gain information from each other that helps to establish fruitful and productive colonies. Zelia's return to France and her refusal to socialize or

circulate beyond the “New Desert” that she uses as a “solitary retreat,” constructed by M. D’Ermancour in a “small wood...to call to our mind our long confinement in the forest” (II.285) suggests that she is unable to exist in a society as restricted as the one to which she returns. In this place, “the house, the gardens, and all the environs are made exactly to resemble the real Desert in the Island of Sumatra, where we spent so many years,” and Zelia “goes every morning constantly to this retreat” (II.285). She returns to Europe, but is clearly in mourning for the life she has lost, and the life she was able to build and contribute to, in the colonies.

What these female castaway narratives, and the fictional female castaway herself, show us is that, even in the midst of frequently virulent attacks on female virtue in the colonies, fiction writers were imagining that women had unique skills to contribute to the imperial drive. In these texts, we find a new kind of female heroine: one who is clearly and very obviously involved in the settlement and maintenance of England’s colonies, while also managing to abhor the same activities, and maintain the same proprieties, as her compatriots in the metropole. In this case, then, like the fictions of Aubin and Haywood examined in chapter one, these female castaway texts posit a way of thinking about the woman in danger that counteracts contemporary theories about what ‘danger’ really means.

#### Chapter 4: Isabel Burton and the Art of Mediating Adventure

*In which our heroine covers for her foremothers, her husband, and herself, and creates a new kind of travel for the 'right' kind of woman*

Weeks before her 'quiet'<sup>19</sup> January 1861 wedding to explorer Richard Burton (1821-1890), Isabel Arundell (1831-1896), daughter of Roman Catholic parents with deep roots in the English aristocracy, wrote in her diary that she imagined she would soon:

follow the footsteps of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Hester Stanhope, [and] the Princess de la Tour d'Auvergne, that trio of famous European women who lived of their own choice a thoroughly Eastern life, and of whom I look to make a fourth. (*Romance* 156)

During the course of her marriage, Burton would, in fact, retrace the steps of these women, travelling through Turkey as Montagu did in 1716-1718, visiting the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria like Lady Hester Stanhope (1776-1839), and journeying incognito in male dress, writing books about her life like Princess de la Tour d'Auvergne, better known as Countess Maria Martini Della Torre (1832-1919).<sup>20</sup> A careful examination of Burton's life indicates that, though she may have traveled to the same places as these women, she did so in a way that used Victorian ideology about the supposed domestic nature of women to distance herself from the excesses, madness and supposed transculturation of Montagu, Stanhope, and most especially Lady Jane Digby (1807-1881), her contemporary and friend. To do so, Burton had to put a significant emphasis on her own notion of propriety and domesticity – even in the face of her transgressions as a woman who married below her class, who traveled

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<sup>19</sup> Their marriage, while not exactly secret, was performed without the knowledge of Isabel's mother and most of her family. She did, however, have her father's blessing, and the marriage was celebrated publicly with friends.

<sup>20</sup> There is little written in English about the Countess. An online post referring to Benedetta Gennaro, who researches Della Torre, discovered during an internet search, suggests that she dressed in male clothing to fight in Crimea with Garibaldi, with whom she fell madly in love after they met in England in 1854. She was the author of the French text, *Episode Politique en Italie de 1848-1858*.

both with and without her husband, and who frequently engaged with his affairs in public – and on the essential differences she manifested when compared to these other women. Because her travels are complicated by the histories of Montagu, Stanhope and Digby, Burton used her writing to dispel suspicions that she could, or would, engage in the same kind of behaviors that Montagu, Digby and Stanhope were supposed to have engaged in when they left England. Complicating Isabel's goal of maintaining her reputation, however, is the very suspect way in which English society perceived her husband, Richard. In enlisting herself as the editor of Richard's texts, and as a mediator between him and the English public, Isabel attempts to make her marriage to Richard, and the life they lived together, into an example of Victorian domesticity that was as normal as it could be outside of England.

This chapter proceeds from a discussion of the lack of critical material about Stanhope, Digby and Burton to one that focuses on the way in which Burton uses the similarities in their collective lives to set herself up as a 'different' kind of female traveler than those who came before her. Using travel as a backdrop for moving beyond the prescribed ideals of female domesticity in Victorian England, Burton uses the liberties she is granted as a female traveler to establish a model for other women who would accompany their husbands or brothers into the vast landscape of the British empire. Because Burton's ultimate goal is to open up the East as a site that other women could safely travel to without risking transculturation, Burton must remove every trace of evidence that she may have somehow succumbed to that threat – like some of the women before her who were supposed to have transculturated, but, in fact, did not – from her own telling of her life story.



### Montagu, Stanhope, Digby, Burton: Critical Heritage?

Though critics have addressed Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's life at length, in-depth critical analyses are lacking when it comes to the lives of Stanhope and Digby (also known as Lady Ellenborough, divorced wife of Lord Ellenborough, one-time Governor General of India) or Burton. Of the three, Burton is the most written about, but current scholarship focuses more on Isabel's role in the publication of Richard's works than they do on Isabel herself. Mary S. Lovell has served as biographer of both Digby and the Burtons, but beyond her work on the couple, most biographers who mention Isabel do so in passing as part of larger projects based on Richard's life and experiences. Beyond Lovell's *A Rage to Live* and Isabel's own autobiography (half written by family friend W.H. Wilkins), little has been said about Isabel's life, her writing, or the space in which the two meet. This chapter aims to partially remedy that critical lack by offering a reading of Isabel Burton as a pioneer of appropriate Victorian domesticity and travel in the East.

Stanhope has been the subject of several biographies, including two recent works by Kirsten Ellis (2008) and Lorna Gibb (2005). Both engage with the facts of Stanhope's life more so than with an analysis of her writing, and there exists no scholarly work on her substantial correspondence during her life in Djoun, Lebanon. The reasons for this are understandable: though Stanhope is the purported author of *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope: Forming the Completion of her Memoirs* (1846) these texts were actually compiled and edited by her doctor, Charles Meryon, who was also responsible for the earlier *Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope* (1845). Unless her original letters are discovered (scholars have been unable to find most of the items that remained in Stanhope's crumbling house after her death. According to Meryon, her servants had been stealing from her for years) it would be difficult to

ascertain which letters Meryon chooses to include are authentic and which are fabrications designed to either guard or destroy her reputation. Complicating the issue of determining the ‘authentic’ Hester Stanhope further is the existence of a text written by Stanhope’s niece, the Duchess of Cleveland. *The Life and Letters of Lady Hester Stanhope: By her Niece, the Duchess of Cleveland* (1914) suggests that Stanhope’s family may have come into possession of some of the letters to which Meryon referred, and either destroyed them or kept them hidden, with the Duchess publishing only the most flattering. Though it is easy to understand the motive behind this act of familial editing – many thought Stanhope had gone mad, and she was involved in at least one relationship with an Arab man – it reflects the difficulty in determining the authentic stories of these women, and the difficulty that families of transculturated women faced in finding a place for her within their histories.

Scholars who wished to enter into discussions of Digby’s life faced a similar challenge as those who wished to learn about Stanhope. Until Lovell was offered access to Digby’s diaries by the current Lord Digby, “several...biographers declared that the diaries were lost” (Lovell *Rebel* xv). Lord Digby, a direct descendant of Jane Digby’s brother Edward, admitted to Lovell that his family has been hiding the diaries for generations, suggesting that, like Stanhope’s family, the Digbys also struggled to define the place that their transculturated ancestor would take in their family. Without Jane’s letters and diaries being made public, however, it is impossible to separate the ‘real’ Jane Digby from the image that Lovell offers us. While the current Lord Digby and his relations insist on restricting access to Jane’s diaries and letters, we must accept the image that Lovell offers us as a true one.

Some of Burton’s works have been published, and her own (auto)biography, *The Romance of Isabel, Lady Burton*, offers some insight into her life. Despite the existence of these

publications, what is clear in an analysis of Burton's writing is that it was so focused on Richard and on making their lives together seem 'normal' that any reader must wonder what parts of her travel narratives represent her life as it was, and what parts offer life as she wanted her audience to see it. Her autobiography was only half-finished at the time of her death, and it fell to a family friend, W.H. Wilkins, to finish it using Isabel's diaries and the stories she told him. In the case of her writing, it seems Burton's goals were fulfilled: like a good Victorian wife's life was supposed to be, Isabel's existence was so entwined with Richard's that it seems almost impossible to imagine her an author in her own right. This chapter does – in some respects – fall prey to this problem, but it does attempt to offer some insight into how a well-educated, aristocratic woman could willingly erase almost all of her own identity for the sake of becoming 'Richard Burton's wife.' Despite its obvious drawbacks, the erasure of her own identity for the sake of establishing herself as a 'wife,' however, opened up a world for Isabel and the women who traveled after her that was far beyond the expectations of a 'normative' Victorian wife.

### **Isabel Burton: The Middle-Class Aristocrat**

Tracing Isabel Burton's aristocratic heritage is simple: her great uncle on her father's side was the 10<sup>th</sup> Baron Arundell of Wardour, and her uncle on her mother's side was the 13<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Bryn. What is not quite as simple is trying to reconcile that heritage with what amounted to a more-or-less complete abdication of this status to become the wife of a captain in the Bengal army and a government employee. Richard and Isabel first met in passing in a garden in Boulogne, and in the four years until they met again, Isabel Arundell often mused on her desire to be his wife. Lovell writes that, despite her feelings for him, in the four years between meetings, Richard "was unreachable, for even if he had been truly interested, her mother would never permit him to court her. He belonged to the 'upper

middle-classes' and was outside their *milieu*" (104). But Isabel had vowed long before she met Richard – on her first season in London – that she would marry her ideal man or no man at all. This early move suggests that Burton, though she did have offers of marriage from those in her social circle, had, from an early age, envisioned a life they could not offer her.

When she met this ideal man, the "creation of [her] fancy," she vowed to be "to such a man wife, comrade, friend – everything to him, to sacrifice all for him [and] to follow his fortunes through his campaigns" (39). Should she "afterwards discover he [was] not for [her]" she would become "a sister of charity of St. Vincent de Paul" (39). Her insistence on either marrying her ideal man or becoming a nun signifies how desperately she must have felt like she did not belong in her aristocratic surroundings. When she first met Richard in Boulogne in 1847, Isabel must have been struck by how much he resembled her ideal.<sup>21</sup>

That Burton felt as if she was destined to be with a man who would take her away from her life as she knew it must have made the time she spent at the balls of London tedious. She knew that a life spent married to someone in her own social circle was not for her, and she decided that she could not possibly marry and

live like a vegetable in the country. I cannot picture myself in a white apron, with a bunch of keys, scolding my maids, counting eggs and butter with a good and portly husband (I detest fat men!) with a broad-brimmed hat and a large stomach. (66)

With this in mind, it is no surprise that Isabel, tired of living like an aristocratic teenager, would be drawn to a man like Richard Burton. Their story is a complicated one. When he

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<sup>21</sup> Isabel's description of her ideal man, in fact, matched Richard's bearing so closely, including his "black hair...brown complexion...[and] large, black, wondrous eyes – those strange eyes you dare not take yours off them" (*Romance* 38) that any reader of her autobiography must have wondered if she actually – as she said – wrote this before she met Richard, or after.

proposed a full ten years after they first met, and six years after they began a courting ritual that would see him (almost) discover the source of the Nile, he warned that their marriage would require her to “give...up your people and all that you are used to” (*Romance* 85). Nevertheless, Isabel stunned her contemporaries and enraged her mother by choosing to marry him. In making this choice, she was not only destined to be away from her family for years at a time, but she would also be forever linked to a man who many believe had questionable sexual tendencies, and who most certainly had a questionable reputation in government service. Though there is no evidence that she regretted her decision, Isabel Burton would spend the rest of her life trying to reconcile Richard’s personal oddities with her own sense of morality and her desire to travel and create a space where other women of means could break free from their futures as domestic ‘vegetables.’ As soon as she accepted his proposal, Isabel began to equip herself for a life that would be radically different than the one she had lived. Despite the fact that the couple would live in foreign locales, and interact with the ‘natives’ of several different countries, Isabel’s preparations had a very distinct English – and Victorian – air about them.

To prepare herself for life as Richard’s wife, Isabel “set herself to rough it and to learn everything which might fit her for the roving life she was afterwards to lead” (*Romance* 155). Retreating to a farmhouse in the country, “in addition to mastering all domestic duties at the farmhouse...[Isabel] trained her hand at outdoor work as well, and learned how to look after the poultry-yard and cattle, to groom the horses, and to milk the cows” (*Romance* 155). Isabel was preparing for life without the servants and comforts that her childhood and teenage years had offered her, but she was also equipping herself to be able to get by without the promise of help. In effect, in getting ready to be a traveling wife, Isabel was equipping herself to perform all the tasks that the female castaways discussed in chapter three had to

learn after disaster struck. In making these preparations, she also distanced herself from her aristocratic foremothers by taking on a life of labor and skill more closely associated with the laboring classes.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall align this kind of preparation for domestic life not only with the rise of evangelicalism, but to a growing secular notion of the complementary natures of men and women. For Davidoff and Hall, by the 1830's and 1840's:

the language used [to describe appropriate womanhood] was increasingly secular and the belief in the natural differences and complementary roles of men and women which had originally been linked particularly to evangelicalism, had become the common sense of the English middle class. (149)

The thesis that Davidoff and Hall present – that between the eighteenth century and the mid-Victorian period, there was a massive shift in the roles of men and women into separate spheres – has been questioned to some extent by critics like Amanda Vickery and Robert Shoemaker. Vickery suggests that “the extent to which shifts in public morality actually stripped women of important powers and freedoms is...obscure” (398). Vickery does acknowledge that “many early nineteenth-century commentators believed that manners and mores had undergone a transformation in their lifetime” but questions whether or not the “onset of prudishness necessarily signals the hemorrhage of important powers for women” (399). That Burton took her domestic duties so seriously signals, at the very least that, for her, the task of making a good home free from the ‘evils’ of the outside world fell solidly on the shoulders of a wife.

There is no doubt, however, that during her life as Richard's wife, Isabel was able to use the fact that she was fulfilling her domestic obligations in order to satisfy her own desires

to live a life that was different than the vegetative state offered to her as an aristocratic woman. Isabel writes that, “I must not forget that my first and best work was to interest myself in all my husband’s pursuits, and to be, as far as he would allow me to be, his companion, his private secretary, and his *aide-de-camp*” (*Romance* 401). Because of this, she “saw and learnt much, not only of native life, but also of high political matters” (401). By being a source of domestic stability for Richard, Isabel could destabilize her own role as a Victorian wife and experience a kind of world that would have been completely closed off to her at home.

Shoemaker accounts for contradictions like the one we find in Isabel – of both the good wife and the heroic female traveler – as due to the move away from the ideology of women as lustful creatures to one that emphasizes the domestic nature and the moral qualities of women, who were advised to “take a more active role in improving their husbands, who in their daily lives were exposed to the corruption of the public world” (121). This supposedly granted the disempowered Victorian woman a significant amount of agency when it came to influencing her husband and children, and though Burton is hardly a case study in proving this argument, her attempts to “improve” her husband in the eyes of others certainly empowered her and granted her more access to a world of public service and governmental administration than she would have had at home. Their domestic arrangements – especially during the times when, working as a consular official, Richard left his post to go exploring for months at a time – gave Burton a sense of duty to England and purpose in public life that would have been limited to her if she had married someone else.

### **Richard and Isabel: A Complicated Man’s Complicated Marriage**

Born on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1821, Richard Burton seemed almost to be genetically pre-programmed for a life of travel. Despite his Irish-English roots, many saw in Richard’s

features something decidedly un-British. Burton, many would say, looked as if he was a descendant of one of the bands of Travelers who lived throughout England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dane Kennedy reports that “those who knew Richard Burton best were fond of identifying him in their biographies and memoirs with those enigmatic, wayfaring people” (13). Alfred Bates Richards, who wrote an early biographical sketch of Burton, wrote that he had “a drop of Oriental, perhaps, gypsy, blood. By gypsy, we must understand the pure Eastern” (qtd. in Kennedy 13). Arthur Symons, the famed poet, considered Burton to be a “gypsy in his terribly magnetic eyes – the sullen eyes of a stinging serpent” (qtd. in Kennedy 13). Fellow adventurer and noted rival Stanley Lane-Poole believed that there were some, “including some of the Romany themselves, who saw gypsy written in his peculiar eyes as in his character, wild and resentful, especially vagabond, intolerant of convention and restraint” (qtd. in Kennedy 13). Kennedy notes that Burton’s “fierce features...and hypnotic gaze...[indicated] the sinister, anarchic mark of the gypsy” (14). Even Isabel’s childhood friend, Hagar Burton, herself a Traveler, believed that Burton shared her heritage when she predicted that Isabel – still quite young at the time – would “bear the name of our tribe, and be right proud of it” (Lovell *Rage* 96).

Richard Burton’s embracing of the ‘gypsy parts’ of his appearance, however, would continue to be problematic for both him and his wife. According to Kennedy, the “rural nomadic existence of the Gypsies” appealed to Richard who enjoyed that Travelers were “unattached to property and unregulated by authorities” (18-9). For Richard, their lifestyle “evoked a nostalgic simplicity freed from the conventions and constraints of modern English society, and especially from conformity to their bourgeois moral code” (18-9). Unfortunately, that code was intimately linked to the will of the Queen, and Isabel (if not



Richard) quickly realized that he would need to be seen to be following the desires of the monarch in order to continue in her service.

Isabel's task was complicated by Richard's own – along with everyone else's – belief that he had genetic links to the Travelers. In an article called "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," Stephen Arata writes that Stoker's Count Dracula, a member of the Traveler Szekely family, also possessed Traveler heritage. Highlighting the problematic nature of the Traveler identity, Arata writes: "Stoker learned from Emily Gerard that the Roumanians [sic] were themselves noted for the way they could 'dissolve' the identities of those they had contact with" (630). Quoting Gerard directly, Arata writes that:

the Hungarian woman who weds a Roumanian [sic] husband will necessarily adopt the dress and manners of his people, and her children will be as good Roumanians [sic] as though they had no Magyar blood in their veins (630-1).

Arata notes that "in life, Dracula was a Roumanian...his ability to deracinate could thus derive as easily from his Roumanian as from his vampire nature" (630-1). Dracula is scary, Arata argues, not simply because of his gruesome appearance and blood-sucking nature, but also because he appropriates and transforms English bodies to do his bidding. "Having yielded to his assault, one literally 'goes native' by becoming a vampire oneself" (630). In this case, "miscegenation leads, not to the mixing of races, but to the biological and political annihilation of the weaker race by the stronger" (630). Wandering around England in a state of lawlessness, the Travelers were always a threat to the racial purity and cultural stability of England and Isabel, fearing both Richard and herself could be accused of 'going native' because of his suspect heritage, had no choice but to try to distance herself from this lifestyle in order to be considered loyal to the staunchly moral Queen.

Richard's penchant for, and skill at, appropriating the appearance, manners, and customs of the Muslims of India and the tribes of Syria would make Isabel's job even more difficult. Richard's 'slippery'ness' as an Englishman would lead Isabel to spend much of her life carefully trying to defend Richard from accusations of cultural impropriety, but also trying to defend herself from accusations that by marrying him, she had committed a transgression beyond merely marrying a man of a different class. Isabel would also be forced to contradict domestic ideologies that called for her to remain stationary at home while Richard took on the more 'dangerous' assignments of his career.

Much of the early talk about Richard's reputation revolved around his 1843 military assignment in the Bengal army. Richard proved himself adept at learning languages, and within a few months he had mastered Hindustani and Arabic, and had explored the religious rites of Hinduism. Eventually, Richard was sent on a special mission by General Charles Napier that would forever cloud his reputation among the other Englishmen in India and at home, even more so than this odd looks and strange behavior, his "use of opium and other drugs, his liaisons with local women, [and] his missions in native mufti" (Kennedy 29). Once General Napier had "made the province [Sindh] safer than any other part of India," he took on another task: the social reform of the British living there (Lovell *Rage* 56). Napier's first act was to try to clean up the local brothels. Lovell writes that "the establishment of brothels near a military camp is inevitable" but when Napier got wind that three of the brothels closest to the camp were places where "boys and eunuchs were for hire" he felt compelled to investigate (57). Because Burton was the only British officer who was trained to speak Sindhi, he was sent to investigate. Naturally, word of his visits to the brothels became public, and Burton's reputation as a man with sexual proclivities outside the norm grew. Richard recorded in his own autobiography that he first began to explore his sexuality

at this time. Though his behavior could indicate that he was gay, troubling were the accusations that his affinity for eunuchs and boys meant that Burton was a pederast. Though Wilkins suggests that these were accusations that Isabel “could not grasp...She was conscious that the thing [‘the baseless rumor, shadowy, indefinite, intangible’] was in the air, so to speak, but she could not even assume its existence” (*Romance* 732) there is also a moment, discussed below, which leads us to question what she knew of Richard’s sexual preferences, and what she might have done to cover them up.

### **Sex and Self-Restraint: The Affairs of Intrepid Women**

James Adams has argued that “the emergent discourse of political economy [in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] accordingly pointed the way to success through self-mastery, the power to defer present gratification for later, greater rewards...well before Victoria came to the throne, then, self-discipline was a pervasive theme in British culture” (128-9). This lack of self-restraint and self-governance comes to be an important marker of difference between Burton and Montagu, Stanhope and Digby. Though we must keep in mind that most of what we know about Isabel is revealed in her own writing (the rest is from short bits in biographies of Burton, including a scathing one by his niece, Georgiana Stistead) she clearly attempts to set herself apart from Digby, Montagu and Stanhope by highlighting their lack of self-restraint in the East, or, in the case of Montagu, as I argue in chapter two, her failure to condemn harem life the way that Burton repeatedly did. Regardless of what Burton “really did” in her marriage and in her travels, her writings illustrate the image of a woman intent on protecting herself from the licentiousness and lack of self-restraint these other women exhibited.

Lady Mary Pierrepont, in an attempt to avoid an unpleasant marriage, eloped with Edward Wortley Montagu the night before she was due to marry Clotworthy Skeffington,

her father's choice. Though Montagu saw her marriage as one of mutual respect and convenience, it became clear that, romantically, she was restless. Her separation from Wortley (which came after a period in which Montagu was repeatedly accused of extramarital affairs), was complete when Montagu met Francesco Algarotti in England and fled to Venice to be with him. Even though there is not much evidence available to track Montagu's other affairs (if they existed), the time she spent in Turkey when Wortley was working as England's ambassador to the Ottoman empire would always be seen as a corrupting force in her life.

Stanhope's romantic life is slightly more mysterious than Montagu's but she too was viewed as a woman who used her resources as an aristocrat to transgress boundaries of English propriety in increasingly bizarre and unacceptable ways. Lorna Gibb argues that Stanhope's first love was Sir John Moore, a man she met while living with her uncle, William Pitt, during his first term as Prime Minister (19). After Moore was killed in battle against Napoleon, Stanhope would be linked to no fewer than three other English lovers in her short life in England: Granville Leveson Gower, an "effeminate dandy" (23) to whom Pitt offered the job of Ambassador to St. Petersburg because his niece was betraying a "public and dramatic passion [for him] that became the talk of society" (25); 22 year-old Michael Bruce, who became her lover during her trip East and whom Hester steadfastly refused to marry; and Captain Loustenneau, the young son of a madman who had come to live with her at D'Joun.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond these confirmed dalliances, Kirsten Ellis reports an affair with Lord Camelford and suggests that Stanhope may have even given birth to his illegitimate child

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<sup>23</sup> Upon his sudden death, Stanhope had Loustenneau's body interred in a tomb in her garden. When missionaries came to bury Hester in the garden tomb after her death, they reportedly used the eye sockets of his skull to hold their candles.

(35). Ellis also claims that among the many things Stanhope hid from Charles Meryon, her personal physician, was a secret lover. She writes that sometime in the 1820's, Hester "took an Arab lover from the village of Djoun. He was, by all accounts, a strikingly handsome man, then in his thirties...He would stay with Hester until the end" (364). According to a Lebanese friend who traveled with Ellis to Lebanon, it was "a generally accepted fact in family lore that her great-great-uncle had been Hester's lover" (364). Indeed, Hester's string of affairs was enough to prompt Crauford Bruce, Michael's father, to comment that "however illustrious her descent and connections" there must have been "something fallacious" in Hester's mind to cause her to "depart from the circumspect proprieties of her sex and yield her reputation in society for the temporary gratification of any passion" (qtd. in Ellis 116). That Stanhope had risked her reputation because she lacked self-restraint and had failed to uphold values of English propriety was a common sentiment among the English who frequently read stories of her exploits in London newspapers.

Isabel Burton never commented publicly on either Montagu's or Stanhope's lives, but based on Burton's comments about following in their footsteps, they were clearly linked in her mind. A woman she did discuss at great length, "the most interesting of all personages" who turned up at Isabel's garden parties in Damascus, was Jane Digby, a woman Burton referred to as Stanhope's "successor" (*Romance* 392). Of Digby, Burton wrote:

she was of the family of Lord Digby, and had married Lord Ellenborough, Governor-General of India, a man much older than herself, when she was quite a girl. The marriage was against her wish. She was very unhappy with him and she ran away with the Prince Schwartzburg when she was only nineteen, and Lord Ellenborough divorced her. (393)

In the paragraph that follows this description, Burton demonstrates her skill in manipulating the details of her friend's life to make her transculturation seem less complete. She tells us that Digby "lived with Prince Schwarzenburg for some years, and had two or three children by him, and then he basely deserted her. I am afraid after that she had led a life for a year or two over which it is kinder to draw a veil" (*Romance* 393).<sup>24</sup> According to Lovell, who wrote biographies of both Digby and the Burtons, Schwarzenburg and Digby did conceive two children, but the couple never lived together. Rather, Schwarzenburg, as indicated in a letter to Digby after he found out about her first pregnancy, advised her "not to come to him...he bitterly regretted the position she had lost because of their affair, and the more so, he said, because it would be impossible for the sake of his future...that they should ever marry" (Lovell *Rebel* 57).

The life that Isabel describes as a "year or two" out of Digby's existence is one that is eerily similar to that of Hester Stanhope, which helps to explain the connection that Burton sees between the two women. Following her break from Schwartzzenburg, Digby conducted a string of affairs that, like Stanhope's, began in Europe and ended in the deserts outside Damascus. After Schwartzzenburg, Digby had a relationship with King Ludwig I of Bavaria. In a telling sign of how infamous she had become by this time, though she was only in her mid-twenties, Ludwig's mistress demanded to know, "how could this Lady Ellenborough, whose scandalous life is known to all the world, have deceived you, your Majesty?" (Lovell *Rebel* 88). After her affair with Ludwig, Digby married his Prime Minister, Baron Carl Theodore de Venningen, who sought to mold her into a domestic servant. With this marriage, Lovell writes that Digby's family hoped "her past sins would be forgotten" (91), but she and Charles (her name for Carl) divorced after Digby left him in the night

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<sup>24</sup> This statement, of course, evokes Montagu's contention that the affairs of Turkish women are hidden by the fact that they wear veils.

accompanied by Spiridon Theotky, a young Greek who served as an attaché to Ludwig's court. While having her own affair with Belgian King Otto, Digby discovered that Theotky had been unfaithful to her and dismissed him from her home.

After this affair, Digby lived her life as "a wanderer, with no ties, no direction. She travelled from one city to another...her only strong emotion being reserved for the lives of women in the East which she regarded as appalling" (Lovell *Rebel* 136). In 1852, when Jane met Xristodolous Hadji-Petros, Otto's General in Lamia and the Governor of Albania, she encountered the first of three Arab men with whom she would become involved. One assumes that Burton either did not know about the first two of these men, or chose purposely to gloss over their existence as she had done with several other of Digby's lovers. From Burton's description of Digby's last husband, Sheik Medjuel el Mazrab, we can gather that if she knew of these affairs, Burton would have reacted to these relationships with the same disapproval with which she regarded Jane's marriage to Medjuel. In any event, the "year or two" over which Isabel felt it was "kinder to draw a veil" amounts to 21 years – nearly one third of Jane Digby's life.

The sexual licentiousness that these women engaged in, combined with Burton's own strict Catholic upbringing, prompted Isabel to try to distance herself from being associated with them in any way she could, starting with her establishment of a proper English home wherever she traveled with Richard.

### **The Home as a Screen: A Domestic Filter**

For Burton, the construction of a stable home base for Richard to return to was an integral part of her duties as a wife. Considering the time Burton spent in the country learning "everything which might fit her for the roving life she was...to lead" after their marriage, she knew she would have to be prepared for any eventuality. Burton saw "this

period [as a] period of preparation for her marriage with the man she loved” (155). One of Burton’s major focuses was to “make [Richard’s] home snug” (*Romance* 162). She felt that even if their house was “small and poor,” she could always see to it that there was “a certain *chic* about it” (162). Before she was married, Isabel drafted a set of “Rules for [her] Guidance as a Wife,” of which her pledge to establish a “*chic*” home was number three. Many of these rules, however, seem to betray an anxiety about Richard’s behavior, including his sexual behaviors. Rule number one declares that Richard should “find in the wife what he and many other men fancy is only to be found in a mistress, that he may seek nothing out of his home” (162). Rule number three, from which I quote above, stresses the foundation of a good home as a way to keep her husband from seeking the comforts of the club, and to “attend much to his creature comforts; allow smoking or anything else; for if you do not *somebody else will*” (162). Burton’s implication here is clear: calls for Victorian wives to make their husbands comfortable with, and satisfied in, their marriages allows Isabel to cover a multitude of both Richard’s sins and her own with the screen of appropriate domesticity.

During a conversation with some harem women in Damascus, Burton emphasizes what she believed to be the important role that women played in establishing a home, while at the same time pointing out to these women how they were failing as wives because their husband practiced polygamy. She explains to the women (in a defense of monogamy) that English men don’t need second wives because women are trained to fulfill their needs:

The woman...must love her husband, be very respectful to him, make his house bright and comfortable...she [should] be constantly waiting upon him, and thinking what she can do to please him...she must not unjustly or uselessly squander his money...she must not confide her domestic affairs to all her friends; she must observe the same refinement and delicacy in all her words and



actions that she observed before her marriage; she must hide his faults from everyone. (*Syria* 157-8)

Knowing that Richard's 'faults' had been fodder for public discussion for a long time, Isabel makes clear in her travel narrative that hiding his faults was not only a personal goal, but one she believed she was tasked with as a Victorian wife.

Isabel Burton believed that she had to do everything she could to keep her husband happy, but also recognized that in the increasingly foreign places in which they were to live – as we learn from the lives of Stanhope and Digby – rules of sexual propriety were slippery at best. Jill Matus has argued that, since “cultural influences were acknowledged to shape, mold, and distort ‘natural’ sexuality and sexual desire...the threat of social interference fuelled the urgency of social texts that attacked the evils of civilization (or its lack)” (9). The sexual relationships that Digby had become an object of discussion for Burton, and she used them – and her own resistance to similar relationships – to distance herself not only from Digby, but from Stanhope as well.

From Charles Meryon's notes about Stanhope's life, it is clear that she failed to practice the domestic skills that were increasingly being identified as 'natural' to women. Considering the way that she reportedly lived before her death, it is clear that Burton's erasure of her history from her autobiography was an attempt to negate even the suggestion of impropriety from Victorian lives in the East. Meryon writes that, when he returned to visit Stanhope after spending some time in England, he discovered that it was “latterly her pride to be in rags,” and that her house was kept by people who had “demoralizing and filthy habits” (*Memoirs* 87). Her home was “hardly better than a common peasant's” with her possessions, dwindling due to theft by her servants, “heaped on a shelf...all in confusion with sundry other things of daily use” (107). Living in an abandoned monastery, Stanhope

herself seemed to crumble into ruins as her home crumbled around her, ultimately living in one small room, the only one with a roof that did not leak, crowded in with her damp and moldering belongings. Burton's almost obsessive attention to domestic order and cleanliness, then, reminds her audience that no matter where she and Richard might live, they would not take up lodgings, or servants, like the ones Stanhope chose. Emerging ideas about the role of women in society suggest the ways in which cleanliness was associated with morality and the preservation of the dignity of the home. Davidoff and Hall write that:

A woman's salvation lay in her responsibilities as mother, wife, daughter, or sister; through her services to the family she could suppress the dangerous parts of herself, associated with her sexuality, which linked her back to Eve. (114)

That most of Stanhope's adult life was spent in a monastery is intriguing, and for an English public that claimed a great deal of anti-Catholic sentiment in its identity, it would have been entirely too easy to associate Stanhope's life in the East with the ruins of England's Catholic past. That she chose a run-down monastery as a home would have immediately evoked the crumbling ruins of monasteries all over England, and as such, implied that Stanhope had willingly entered a world that symbolized England's uncivilized, medieval past. That the monastery was located in a country associated with a crumbling Eastern empire would have done nothing to dissuade those who knew about Stanhope from associating her life in the East with cultural degradation.

Davidoff and Hall note that "concern with dirt and disorder drew new boundaries between what was valuable and what was waste and in the process, moral or social criteria were often used rather than the hygienic standards of the twentieth century" (382). The chaos of Stanhope's house and the "demoralizing and filthy habits" of her servants, indicates her lack of attention to the finer points of domesticity that were designed to keep her, and

her home, free of the corrupting influences lurking outside her door. Conduct book writer Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote that: “not only must the house be neat and clean” but the Victorian woman should ensure that “around every domestic scene there must be a strong wall of confidence which no internal suspicion can undermine, no external enemy could break through” (26). For the English, the squalor of Stanhope’s life signaled a cultural degradation long associated with the East (as I have documented in earlier chapters), and Stanhope’s way of life merely emphasized the degree of her transculturation. Burton’s attempt to distance herself, and hence the ‘average’ female traveler who wanted to experience life outside of England, from the transculturated Stanhope, revolves partly around the emphasis she placed on making a home for Richard that was comfortable and as close to what they would have had in England as possible.

Two years after they were married, Richard accepted a post as English Consul to West Africa. Due to concerns for her safety, he made Isabel stay at home, a move that deeply upset her. On his return, Lovell reports that Isabel declared that she was “no longer content to live as she had...never seeing him, ‘neither a wife, nor maid, nor widow’” (417). No longer wishing to be part of a marriage in which she had no role, Isabel would accompany Richard on every subsequent posting until his retirement. Following his return from West Africa, Richard and Isabel sailed to Tenerife, where Richard worked as English consul. The enthusiasm with which Burton undertook her domestic tasks is clear here: Lovell writes that, “despite having just walked 20-odd miles” to their new home, “Isabel took charge” (417). Sending Richard out of the drawing room and borrowing an apron, Isabel “swept it clean, ordered the hangings washed [and] had a few of the better items of furniture, including some screens, carried back in” (417). By the time Richard returned, “the room had been screened into four separate areas...it was cleaned and smelled sweet, with

the windows cast open to the sea breezes” (417). Lovell acknowledges that though both Isabel and Richard knew the house was “never going to be a palace...Isabel had made a home of it with characteristic energy, resilience, and enthusiasm” (417).

Davidoff and Hall, along with other scholars of domesticity like Shoemaker, reflect on how important this kind of housekeeping was in Victorian culture: concerned that dirt and dust would link respectable women with the degeneracy of the poor, women like Isabel were often obsessed with ridding their homes of the obvious signs of labor (Davidoff and Hall 383). Burton’s use of screens in order to make four different and separate spaces for her and Richard (as opposed to the one room in which Stanhope lived) signified her concern to add a more English aspect to their lives in Tenerife. For Davidoff and Hall, “segregating the mess and smell of food preparation from the social ritual of eating became an important hallmark of respectability” (383) and by separating her home into four spaces, Burton emphasizes to her readers that even while traveling, a Victorian woman could – with a bit of hard work – establish a home that would reflect the ones set up by her compatriots at home. Her use of screens to divide the room would also keep both her and Richard from having to constantly associate with their lower class, and often racially diverse, servants.

Burton’s home life, and the fact that she was in a respectable marriage (even if it was with a questionably respectable man, whose rampant drug use and possible sexual desire for boys would always haunt their marriage) kept her free from being associated with Stanhope, but when it came to defining herself in opposition to Digby, Burton would have to work much harder. Though she is silent on the matter of both Stanhope and Montagu’s lives, Burton is particularly vocal about the way Digby lived in the East:

what was incomprehensible to me was how she could have given up all she had in England to live with that dirty little black – or nearly so – husband. I went to

see her one day, and when he opened the door to me I thought at first he was a native servant. I could understand her leaving her coarse, cruel husband, much older than herself, whom she never loved (every woman has not the strength of mind and the pride to stand by what she has done); I could understand her running away with Schwartzenburg; but the contact with that black skin I could not understand. Her Shaykh was very dark – darker than a Persian, and much darker than an Arab generally is...that made me shudder. (395)

Isabel's list of Digby's transgressions – leaving her husband, running off with Schwartzenburg and not having the strength of mind to stand by her marriage – suggests a growing sense of consternation that ends with Digby's inexcusable sin: to allow herself to gratify her sexual desires with a man with “black” skin. The suggestion that Medjuel is not an Arab or a Bedouin, but “black” is a key not only to the extent Isabel believed Digby had transculturated, but also to Isabel's sense of how her compatriots might view her own transgressions.

Anne McClintock writes that during the later nineteenth century, “Victorian domestic space was also brought under the disciplinary figure of anachronistic space. Women who transgressed the Victorian boundary...became increasingly stigmatized as specimens of *racial regression*” (42). McClintock notes that: “toward the end of the century, increasingly vigilant administrative measures were taken against open or ambiguous relations, against concubinage, against metizo [*siz*] customs. Metissage generally...represented the paramount danger to racial purity and cultural identity in all forms” (48). That Stanhope and Digby lived openly with, in Burton's words, “dirty little black – or almost so” men, marked them as being racially degenerate in some very obvious ways. With this in mind, it does not seem so strange that Burton refused to discuss Stanhope's life, even though she and Richard

followed her to Palmyra, visited Syria, and likely knew much of Stanhope's history.

Stanhope's absence and Burton's ongoing attempts to hide or rewrite the most offensive or deplorable aspects of Digby's life are an attempt to limit the influence that these women had on English conceptions of female travelers in the East. By labeling *Digby* as Stanhope's successor and not herself, Burton tries to push these women – very public representations of the hazards that life in the East posed to women – to the margins and carve out a space within the world of normative Victorian practice for the female traveler. This necessarily required that she gloss over the more transgressive parts of her marriage to Richard as well.

That many of the problematic issues associated with travel were ones that revolved around the sexual lives of travelers has been made evident in the previous chapters. By the time Stanhope, Digby and Burton traveled, not much had changed in that respect. Lucy Bland writes that, for women, “modesty as a protection was highly precarious: numerous factors could lead to its loss...it was thought of as an inhibitory force which ensured women's ‘purity’ through protecting them from their ‘lower’ sexual selves” (57). The loss of modesty represented in Montagu's flagrant sexual dalliances later in life (which always seemed to be connected to the time she spent in the East), and the lives that Stanhope and Digby led, represented, for Victorians, the loss of the sexual innocence on which womanhood was formed. Bland goes on to write that “in the late nineteenth century, a number of scientists were declaring prostitutes' sexuality and lack of modesty as signs of atavism – reversion to a more ‘primitive’ stage of evolution...[and] there was much talk of ‘primitive promiscuity’” (57). Though these three women were hardly prostitutes, they all practiced lifestyles that fell far from the norm. The sexual affairs that Stanhope and Digby conducted mark them with the signs of what Dr. Charles Mercier referred to as “moral imbecility” (qtd. in Bland 58). That Burton took off with Richard – a man she married

without the permission of her family, and who occupied a different social status than she did – was enough of a transgression that, for the people at home, it would not have been much of a stretch of the imagination to associate Isabel with these other women.

Burton, as if anticipating this comparison, took steps in her writing to diffuse the possibility that her readers would make this association. Bland notes that “if a woman maintained her modesty she was defined by her modesty; if she lost her modesty, she was defined and ruled by her sexuality” (60). Knowing that Richard’s career depended on her being seen as a model of appropriate femininity, Burton tried to negate the possibility that she could be compared to Stanhope and Digby by noting how the ways in which their lives were different from hers. At the same time, Burton also had to mediate the fears of transculturation by suggesting that even the heavily transculturated Digby might have had her regrets.

Burton tells us that, despite the fact that Digby was married to an Arab and “passed [half a year] in the desert in the tents of the Bedouin tribe, living absolutely as a Bedouin woman” (394):

it was curious how she had retained the charming manner, the soft voice, and all the graces of her youth. You would have known her at once to be an English lady, well born and bred, and she was delighted to greet in me one of her own order....She was devoted to her Shaykh, whereat I marveled greatly. Gossip had said that he had other wives, but she assured me that he had not, and that both her brother Lord Digby and the British Consul required a legal and official statement to that effect before they were married. She appeared to be quite foolishly in love with him...though the object of her devotion astonished me.

Her eyes often used to fill with tears when talking of England, her people, and old times...poor thing! She was far more sinned against than sinning! (395-6)

Burton's paragraph here is genius when we consider her attempts to suggest that Digby had not lost as much of her Englishness as her situation might suggest.

Burton is careful to note that her reader – and any traveler encountering Digby – would “have known her at once to be an English lady, well born and bred” (just like Isabel herself). Despite her relationship with Medjuel, she has “retained the charming manner, the soft voice, and all the graces of her youth” (395-6). Burton then frees Digby from the charge of being merely one of Medjuel's many wives, and perhaps even a victim of a cruel joke on his part, by making sure that her audience knows that both her brother and the British consul had approved the marriage. This point was an especially sensitive one for Isabel: Richard's *Highlands of Brazil* (1868) contained, among other things, his opinion that polygamy was an important practice in some circumstances. Richard believed that in certain newly established or sparsely populated places, polygamy would be key to increasing the number of inhabitants and reducing poverty. Having helped to usher this text through publication, Isabel included (apparently with Richard's permission) a preface indicating that though Richard supported polygamy, she did not. She firmly states in this work that she: “point[s] the finger of indignation...at the unnatural and repulsive law, Polygamy, which the author is careful not to practice himself, but from a high moral pedestal he preaches to the ignorant as a means of population in young countries” (*Rage* 493). In this preface, written in the midst of suppositions about the validity and legitimacy of Burton's own marriage and his admiration for Eastern customs, Isabel makes sure that Richard's audience knows that he “is careful not to practice” polygamy himself, and, in making reference to polygamy in Digby's case, Burton suggests that if Digby – for all her faults and her displays of sexual wantonness



– could not fathom entering into a polygamous marriage, it would be almost impossible for any other English woman to consider doing so, including Isabel herself.

Finally, Burton turns to what might be the most difficult part of Digby's life to rationalize and defend: her choice to marry the 'black' Medjuel. Burton's contention that Digby is "foolishly" in love with Medjuel classifies this affair as an irrational one, and one that will end once Digby comes to her senses. Fortunately, Burton finds a way out of the inevitable comparison between Digby's irrational love for Medjuel and her own love for Richard: she states that, though Digby is in love now, her regrets and her sadness over the loss of "England, her people, and old times" may yet bring the woman around. Even Digby's love for England is intact, which suggests that a 'normal' woman would have no trouble keeping her senses in the East.

One wonders, after reading Burton's autobiography, exactly why she chose to enter into such a defense of Digby, one that would continue even up to the point when false rumors of Digby's death filled the papers with obituaries reflecting on the eccentricities of her life. These enraged Isabel, who responded angrily in the *Morning Post*. Of Digby she wrote:

her heart was noble, and she was charitable to the poor...she fulfilled all the duties of a good Christian lady and an Englishwoman...She had but one fault (and who knows if it was hers?) washed out by fifteen years of goodness and repentance. She is dead...let us shame those who seek to drag up the adventures of her wild youth to tarnish so good a memory.<sup>25</sup>

Burton certainly counted Digby as a friend, but this passionate defense is striking considering that obituaries written on the false news of Digby's death did not exaggerate her

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<sup>25</sup> This letter appeared in three major newspapers in March of 1873: *The Times*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Morning Post*.

exploits as much as Burton thought. For instance, in an obituary that spread widely through London and British newspapers, a “correspondent from Beyrout” wrote in a dispatch published Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1873, that Jane Digby had died, and that he’d heard so from her husband. This man, the obituary claimed, was “Sheikh Abdul...the ninth husband of Lady Ellenborough” whom she met after going to Italy and marrying “six times in succession” (*Morning Post*). After this, the obituary reports, she “built a house for” an “old Palikar chieftain,” and finally was “so pleased with the camel driver Sheik Abdul...she was married to him after the Arab fashion” (*Morning Post*). Though this obituary (not surprisingly) classifies Medjuel as a camel driver rather than a Bedouin prince, and invents the “old Palikar chieftain,” it does not misrepresent the number of lovers (though she took many outside of marriage) that Digby had. Burton’s need to defend Digby, however, is more complicated than simply needing to defend her friend from accusations that were largely true. Instead, her defense of Digby shows just how far Isabel would go to defend herself and her marriage from similar accusations. Accusations, whether justified or not, made about the sexual exploits of female travelers led Isabel Burton to try to defend the ability of women to travel without engaging in sexual relationships with ‘foreign’ men. To do so, she was required to rewrite the lives of her forbears in order to downplay their transculturation while carefully guarding her own reputation, too.

If Isabel Burton was content, even idyllically happy, to marry a man with “straight Arab features,” a “brown complexion,” and who shared a heritage with Travelers, to what do we owe her confession that Digby’s marriage to an Arab is “astonishing”? Part of Burton’s defense of Digby revolves around her own knowledge that the “gypsy” or “Arab” parts of Richard’s features mark him as different – racially, genetically, physically different – from other English men. Burton’s astonishment that Digby would marry a “dirty little black

– or nearly so – husband” could be matched by a similar social astonishment that the aristocratic Isabel Arundell would marry a man with no money, no prospects, and brown and ‘Arab’ features. Though the thought of being touched by Medjuel makes Burton “shudder” in disgust, his Arabic features are ones she admits to seeing in Richard, so Medjuel’s features become even more racially exaggerated to show how he stands apart from Richard. The Bedouin prince is no longer an Arab, but “very dark – darker than a Persian, and much darker” than his compatriots. The emphasis on just how dark the desert-dwelling Medjuel was serves to try to lighten the darkness of Burton’s own skin color in contrast. Burton the traveler had to be seen as Burton the patriot, and if Richard himself capitalized on his Arab features during his travels, then Isabel needed to do what she could to distance him from the implications that his racial difference meant that he was somehow deviant. More than that, though, Burton needed again to distance herself from accusations that she married a man with a suspect racial identity. Burton’s plan to open up the possibilities of travel for ‘normal’ Victorian women would be completely undone if she was seen as too transgressive – if she was, like Digby – married to one of the race of ‘black enchanters’ that Shaftesbury had warned about several generations earlier.

As I have already suggested, Burton’s emphasis on her domestic attributes are integral in this process, especially when the Burtons lived in Syria. Isabel writes that “when we were in the East Richard and I made a point of leading two lives” (*Romance* 397). In their Consular roles, they “strictly conformed to English customs and conventions” but when they were off duty, Isabel writes: “we used to live a great deal as natives, and so obtained experience of the inner Eastern life” (389). Immediately after this, though, she tells that “Richard is my guide in all things; and since he adapted himself to native life, I endeavored to adapt myself to it also” (398). Suggesting that she is acting strictly under Richard’s orders,

Burton is careful to remove any blame for her 'Eastern life' from herself. As an example, she tells us, "though we always wore European dress in Damascus and Beyrout, we wore native dress in the desert. I always wore the men's dress on our expeditions in the desert and up the country. By that I mean the dress of the Arab men" (398). It is under Richard's orders that she dresses as an Arab man, but she suggests, however, that these clothes are not as transgressive as we might think, arguing that "this is not so dreadful as Mrs. Grundy may suppose, as it was all drapery, and does not show the figure" (*Romance* 398).

Though her clothes may hide her figure, there is some suspicion, if we read Burton's narration of this scene in *Syria* rather than her autobiography, that there might be more to this costume than just convenience. On their journey to Palmyra, Isabel claims, "all along the road I have been generally taken for a boy. I had no idea of any disguise" (I.223). Right away, Burton marks this as an accident – though others mistake her for a boy, she is not dressed as one on purpose – but immediately following her claim to not be disguised, Burton tells us that "as soon as I found out I encouraged the idea...as such I shall meet with respect only second to the Consul himself. As such I shall be admitted everywhere, and shall add to my qualifications for traveling" (223-4). There are two issues at play here. First, Burton suggests that her donning of this male dress opens up the world of Syria for her much more broadly than it would as a woman. She writes: "so attired I could do what I liked, go into all the places white women are not deemed worthy to see, and receive all the respect and consideration that would be paid to the son of a great man" (I. 224). Beyond that freedom, however, her claim that Richard requested that she dress up as – in the words of a Greek Orthodox priest they meet on their journey – his "son" complicates the nature of their relationship, and again raises questions about his rumored sexual preference for young men. The fact that Isabel, a woman who carefully controlled her husband's image in so many

ways, did not seem to realize that her readers might connect Richard's proclivities with her dress (and the fact that it was in the East, where they were traveling, that he spent so much time in brothels featuring eunuchs and young men) is curious, and possibly confirms Wilkins's suggestion that she simply did not understand the seriousness of the accusations against Richard.

There are other moments, however, when Isabel seems to protest rumors against Richard just enough to give rise to suspicions that they may have been true, or that she recognized them as possibilities. As I suggested in my discussion of Jane Digby's possibly polygamous husband, we see Burton rush to the woman's defense, declaring that there was no chance that Digby was in a polygamous marriage. Burton's editorial preface to Richard's book on the highlands of Brazil makes no pretenses about how this rumor could damage Richard's future prospects. In a letter to Richard's publisher, who wanted to remove her preface, Isabel wrote:

it would be more profitable to smash up the book than *not* to let my preface stand as it is. The Queen *hates* polygamy and *I am acting under orders*. The British public hates polygamy. Captain Burton has chaffed the public long enough. I now intend to make it my business that it shall understand him. The Brazilian Government is Catholic. The Empress Ultra-papist. Do you think that the Emperor would order three or four thousand copies to be distributed in his Empire if Captain Burton's animus were not somewhat annulled. The men in your office who set you against my preface are underhand enemies to my husband. (Lovell *Rage* 494)

That Isabel is "acting under orders" takes away the possibility that she chose to speak out against polygamy on her own, and suggests that Richard may have commanded her to write

the preface in order to remove any suspicion that she was in a polygamous union. The emphasis on the Queen's opinion of polygamy seems irrelevant here unless Isabel is attempting to align herself and Richard with Victoria's normative domestic arrangements.

In Isabel's direct reference to the idea that Richard enjoyed "chaffing" the public on purpose, we see that she had clearly had enough of his attempts to seem more 'dangerous' in British eyes than he might have been in real life. Though he did not seem to care whether or not he was removed from service to England, Isabel certainly did. In her letter to Tinsley, his publisher, she reveals her motives. Beyond simply protecting Richard from gossip, she writes that she meant "Captain Burton to take a much higher stand in the world than he has ever done. I have got the wedge in now and I shall din it in. You know how his writings have kept him back from place or power" (*Rage* 493). The 'wedge' Burton referred to would come to occupy the space between what Richard did and wrote and the public text that he published.

Biographers and scholars have commented at length on Isabel's interest in Richard's public affairs. Lovell writes that: "earlier biographers have castigated Isabel, accusing her of interfering and of causing harm to Richard's career by her frequent lobbying of officials on his behalf" (391). Though it seems clear that Isabel did involve herself heavily in Richard's public affairs, and may have unwittingly drawn attention to his appreciation for polygamy, it seems unlikely that anything she did could cause more harm to his career than his attitude already had. Her autobiography includes transcriptions of several letters she sent to Lord Granville, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, when she got wind that merchants in Damascus were complaining because Richard could not be bribed into waiving customs fees (another example of his normative British values), and that Isabel was actively trying to convert Muslims and Jews in the city. She tells Lord Granville "I have always understood

that it is a rule amongst gentlemen never to drag a lady's name into public affairs" and then proceeds to claim that the Jewish man who made the accusations against her had treated her "like a man" by complaining in the first place (*Romance* 456). By arguing that the Jewish merchant was treating her like a man, Isabel felt she was able to respond in kind. What she may not have realized, however, was that by drawing attention to Richard's lack of 'manly' action in defending her, she was emphasizing not only his difference from normative values, but possibly his effeminacy – a questionable move in light of the charges of sexual impropriety that were always circulating against him.

Later, she takes up this cause again, acknowledging her transgression in writing to Lord Granville in the first place, but insisting that she do so until she properly defended Richard and herself. "My Lord, I trust you will exempt me from any wish to thrust myself into public affairs, but it is difficult for Captain Burton to notice anything in an official letter concerning his wife" (463). Here, Burton transgresses gender lines again, not only engaging in public affairs, but defending herself, rather than allowing Richard to defend her. Isabel seems to understand implicitly here that she has become a target because of Richard's conduct and needs to do something about it. Whether or not she was trying to convert the Jewish citizens of Damascus, she became a target of these accusations because Richard's behavior (admirable as it was) was so outside the norm.

### **Editing the Text:**

Isabel's preface to Richard's early work on Brazil is just the first of many moments where she attempts to mediate his textual interactions with the English public. In this preface, she not only notes that she has supervised *Highlands of the Brazil* through publication but she again uses the opportunity to distance Richard from accusations that he has converted to Islam. She tells us that: "although he frequently informs me, in a certain

Oriental way that ‘the Moslems can permit no equality with women,’ yet he has chosen me, his pupil, for this distinction, in preference to a more competent stranger” (Lovell *Rage* 493). Burton tries to suggest that if Richard *had* converted to Islam, he would never have let her – a woman – help him with publication.

Though the rumors would always circulate, Isabel was doing her best to refute conjecture that Richard had converted to Islam or any other faith. Her attempts to make their lives ‘appropriate’ would necessarily need to involve mediating Richard’s often scandalous written work for a public audience. By doing so, Isabel would try to free him from some of the scandal of his later years, while at the same time freeing the traveling English woman from the notion that the East – from whence much of Richard’s final literary productions originated – was a lascivious and shameful place for a ‘proper’ woman to live.

In her preface to Richard’s *Highlands of Brazil*, Burton promises her reader that she has not availed herself “of [her] discretionary powers to alter one word of the original text,” while at the same time attempting to, at the very least, change or hide parts of Richard’s past. She writes “I protest vehemently against his religious and moral sentiments which belie a good and chivalrous life” (493). Many adjectives were used to describe Richard Burton during the course of his life, but I have yet to find a reference (not written by Isabel, that is) that describes him as being ‘chivalrous.’ By aligning Richard with the purest, most noble notions of British masculinity, Isabel wanted the public to understand that, for all his bluster, he was simply an Englishman like all the others.

Writing to a friend whom she hoped would convince the editor of *The Times* to review Richard’s work on the source of the Nile in a positive light, Isabel directly challenged rumors that were circulating about Richard and his refusal to pay his escorts a fair wage. She claims:



“they are making a complete Aunt Sally of the poor fellow, and he is in Africa and can’t stand up for himself” (*Rage* 392). Directly linking his bad reputation in the press with rumors about Richard’s sexual preferences and conduct while in India, Isabel writes: “you will say he deserves it for his polygamous opinions. This is a man who has married one wife, who is a domestic man when at home and a home-sick man when away” (392).<sup>26</sup> Tucked into the letter was a review written by a good friend of Richard’s that Isabel wished published in the paper. *The Times* did not publish this review, and the *London Review*, considering a passage in *Abeokuta* about the stunning beauty and sexual availability of the women of Africa, openly wondered: “we should like to know what Mrs. Burton, to whom as his ‘best friend’ the book is dedicated, thinks of these portions of the book so lovingly inscribed to her” (415). Hidden in this comment is not only the implication that Isabel was some kind of fool who could not see that her husband was leading her on, but also the suggestion that Isabel had read these works and approved of every salacious bit.

Though Isabel’s influence on Richard’s early works tends to revolve around ushering them through the publication process – beyond her preface to *Brazil* there is no evidence that she offered any real input on his writing in any other way – her influence on two of his later texts, his translation of *A Thousand Nights and a Night* and his final work, a republication of *The Perfumed Garden* with a previously unknown last chapter, are well known. For Richard, the “sanitized fairy stories that found a place in the libraries and drawing rooms of middle-class Victorian families” were based on the original French translation by Antoine Galland, and “bore little resemblance to the rollicking and bawdy chronicles so appreciated by male audiences across the Orient” (661). These stories were so licentious that Isabel declared a number of times that Richard had forbidden her from reading the material in an attempt to

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<sup>26</sup> I question how home-sick Richard may have become. During the course of their marriage, he would often leave Isabel at home for months on end to go exploring.

preserve her modesty and reputation. On the matter of this translation, Isabel wrote to a friend that “Dick does all the translation and except consulting me on a word or passage, I am not allowed to read it” (683).

Isabel’s suggestion that the content of these texts was not appropriate for a woman is key to her own identity as a mediatory force between Richard Burton and Victorian England. Taking up the cause for Richard’s unexpurgated edition, Isabel insists that, rather than being a text of licentious tales designed to inflame the lusts of men ‘like’ Richard, *The Thousand Nights and a Night* was a work of science, and her language suggests that Richard’s knowledge of lust is similar – and therefore as equally as appropriate – as that of a doctor dissecting a body in order to learn biology. She writes that Richard “dissected a passion from every point of view, as a doctor may dissect a body, showing its source, its origin, its evil, and its good, and its proper uses, as designed by Providence and Nature” (*Romance* 729).

Richard’s translation, it is important to remember, was not just a group of stories about life in the court of an Arabian king. Lovell is quite right in noting that the *Nights* represented “the fruits of [Richard’s] lifetime’s research”:

his knowledge of anthropology, ethnology, geography, geology, metallurgy, mining, botany, biology, linguistics and astrology, and his overriding inquisitive interest in sexual mores, all come together here in an intriguing eclectic harvest of information, ranging from the positions of the stars in the heavens to female circumcision and sodomy. (Lovell *Rage* 687-688)

Despite the vast academic knowledge contained in these footnotes, however, it was clear that if the Society for the Suppression of Vice had discovered evidence of the work’s publication, all existing copies would have been confiscated and destroyed. Rather than selling the texts through a bookseller, Isabel and Richard sold subscriptions – nearly a

thousand of them – for each of the ten original volumes and the six additional ones published later. Most offensive in the collection was the section on pederasty, found mainly in Burton’s “Terminal Essay” published at the end of the sixth additional volume (this is especially intriguing in light of Isabel’s sporting the dress of a boy in Syria). This may have been a thoroughly academic text, but that did little to redeem it for Richard’s critics. Henry Reeve of the *Edinburgh Review* noted that “probably no European has ever gathered such an appalling collection of degrading customs and statistics of vice” but, though there is the implicit lauding of Richard’s academic work in this comment, Reeve immediately points out how this information is completely useless, because “no decent gentleman will long permit [it] to stand upon his shelves,” and no one else should bother reading it: “Galland is for the nursery, Lane for the study, and Burton for the sewers” (qtd. in Lovell *Rage* 688).

Subsequent editions removed the section on pederasty, though Lovell maintains that “Burton wrote this essay most clinically, detailing the history from the earliest time of what he called the ‘love of boys’ rather than the act itself” (696). Unfortunately, it became increasingly difficult – considering what the English public knew of Richard’s early life in India and his seeming celebration of pedophilia – to focus on the ‘clinical’ tone of Richard’s work. And, though Richard seemed to feel that the creation of the Kama Shashtra Society, the publisher that would be named on the work, would protect he and Isabel and their friends from any charges under the Offensive Publications Act, “Isabel...would live in fear of the Society for the Suppression of Vice for her life” (688).

Reviews like Reeve’s (and there were many, many, reviews like his) prompted Isabel to attempt her first – and second most important – act to mediate Richard’s writing for the world. Richard Phillips notes astutely that Richard and Isabel, despite the success of their

marriage, operated on different sides of Victorian society. It is safe to argue that Phillips is correct when he notes that:

above all, the Burtons disagreed on matters of sexuality and morality. Richard vehemently opposed, and Isabel broadly supported, the agenda of contemporary purity movements...Richard and/or Isabel's engagement with social purity – specifically with the sexual discourse and politics of sexuality – spanned the wider historical contexts of the movements, from the 1860's to the end of their lives, but was most pronounced in the last 7 or 8 years of Richard's life (from around 1883-1890) and the years of Isabel's widowhood (1890-96). (244-245)

Because of the couple's disagreements about purity and morality, Isabel was necessarily tasked with trying to rewrite or edit Richard's work in order to make their appeal stronger for a wider, and decidedly more morally focused, English public. Though her job as Richard's editor manifested itself in many ways (including letters to the press and appeals to her aristocratic friends to intervene on his behalf), her mediation of his work took on two incredibly public forms in her later life. First, in Isabel's insistence that she produce a re-written version of the *Arabian Nights* and, second, in her destruction of Burton's manuscript copy of *The Scented Garden* after his death.

Phillips argues that “censorship formed a more prominent part of Isabel's purity activism later in her life, when she deleted and destroyed some of the sexual content in her husband's work in her capacity as editor and literary executrix” (254). Lovell argues that, in the weeks and months after the publication of *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, Isabel began to grow worried about the text's reputation, and began work on her own, expurgated version of Richard's text. Justin Hartly, M.P., a friend of the Burtons, was reputedly enlisted to go through the text and “edit [it]...for words that might be considered too obscene for ‘Lady

Burton's edition of her Husband's *Arabian Nights*' (also known as the Household Edition)," cleverly dedicated to "The Women of England" (*Rage* 701). Hartly's task was, essentially, to remove words, scenes, or notes that were too obscene for Isabel to read, and Isabel would then remove the parts that were too obscene for other women to read. Lovell reports, however, that the Burton's own copy of the text displays both Richard and Isabel's handwriting in the margins, and contains "no words 'inked out' to make it suitable for her to read," suggesting, of course, that she read the text in its entirety (*Rage* 701) and must have been well aware of the content. Burton's failure to admit that she read the work is yet another attempt to avoid linking her own life with the sexual mysteries of the East. Despite all she had been through with Richard, she desperately wanted to convey the sense that her life had not been corrupted or negatively influenced by the East.

That Isabel called her text the "Household Edition" suggests strongly that she felt that Richard's work had no place within the confines of the respectable home. Her text would be, she wrote "suitable for the drawing room," and, as such, would be for women to read in their spare time. Cleverly, though, Isabel's use of the term 'household' employs a public/private space binary that suggests that Richard's text is suitable only for the public: the world of male academics, researchers, and scholars, and not for inside the more female-oriented (though, of course, not exclusively female) Victorian home. By producing this text, Isabel effectively blocks the doors of the modest, middle-class Victorian house not only from the threats of the East, but also from the more sexually 'immoral' aspects that the book suggests are features of life there. Isabel's female-oriented audience would still get the adventure and the mystery of Eastern travel, but without the threats to their virtue that the text highlighted. Isabel also removed the bulk of Richard's footnotes from her version, clearly assuming that though this information was key for his male readers, her female ones

would deem this information unnecessary, uninteresting, or not within their province to know. Considering that the bulk of Richard's analysis of *The Thousand Nights* focused on the erotic, I suggest that she believed that this information was not only unnecessary, but improper for her female audience. Indeed, in one swift act of editing, it is almost as if Isabel sought to ban Richard, and the things he represented, from the Victorian home completely.

Isabel's version of the *Nights* sold fewer than 500 copies, a likely testament to the divisive nature of the text itself. The public wanted to read either the full version, to satisfy their curiosity, their lust, or their academic interests, or they were so scandalized by it that they refused even to read an expurgated version. Richard himself astutely picked up on this phenomenon, writing in the last of his *Supplemental Volumes* that "even innocent girlhood tossed aside the chaste volumes in utter contempt" (Lovell *Rage* 713). It seems likely that even the normally astute Isabel misread the feelings of the Victorian public about Richard's work. This fact is not nearly as strange as it may seem when we consider that, despite his foibles, Isabel firmly believed in her husband's virtues despite all that was suspected of him after his exploits in India.

Following Richard's death in Trieste in 1890 (in another attempt to soften Richard's image as a heathen, Isabel had a local priest administer the Catholic last rites – a move that would infuriate his family – but suggest to others that he had given up Islam for Christianity), Isabel engaged in a steady process of clearing out Richard's private papers before she returned to England with his body for burial. W.H. Wilkins, the family friend who took up writing Isabel's autobiography after her death, writes that:

Lady Burton's first act after her husband's death was to lock up his manuscript and papers and secure them against all curious and prying eyes – a wise and necessary act under the circumstances, and one which was sufficient to show

that, great though her grief was, it did not rob her for one moment of her faculties. (722)

That Isabel did not lose control of her faculties is important, because upon her return to England, madness would be among the kindest charges leveled at her. Lovell tells us that though Isabel “strenuously denied” that the first thing she did was burn everything Richard had left behind, this version of the story became the accepted myth of the death of the famous explorer. It was reported, and widely believed, that “on the day after Richard’s death she locked herself in the room and systematically burned all of his personal papers, diaries, and erotic manuscripts, beginning with *The Scented Garden*” (*Rage* 744). Richard’s critics, upon hearing the news (which Isabel herself reported in a letter to London newspapers) assumed that the reason was that “Richard had written derogatively of their relationship and/or of his own...proclivities” (*Rage* 744). Wilkins suggests that Isabel was “absolutely devoted to her husband and his interests, as she had been in his lifetime, [and] she was equally jealous of his honor now that he was dead;” her systematic burning of his papers was to preserve Richard’s honor from his critics (*Romance* 726). This was not a popular move, and Wilkins testifies that, “for this act the vials of misrepresentation and abuse were poured on Lady Burton’s head...she has been called hysterical and illiterate” (726). Fortunately, we have Isabel’s own words to explain why she burned *The Scented Garden* – a move that cost her at least £6000. In a letter to the *Morning Post*, written June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1890, Isabel went public with the news that many of Richard’s closest friends and collaborators had feared. Justifying her public letter because “some 1,500 potential subscribers had been expecting to receive *The Scented Garden* and she was unable to cope with the correspondence” combined with the “great deal of talk and excitement as to what manuscripts he [Richard] might have left behind” (Lovell *Rage* 760), Isabel wrote:

I have guarded every scrap of his writing as jealously as if it were the Holy Grail. After [his death] I locked up his rooms, knowing there were many things which...should be private between ourselves...I know them [his manuscripts] as a shepherd knows his sheep. I have worked with him for 30 years and have been told everything...I know all his plans and only in one incidence have I not cooperated. (qtd. in Lovell *Rage* 760)

Isabel's implication here that she is a shepherd not only for Richard's work, but for Richard as well, is a key indication that she felt herself responsible not only for mediating his textual relationship with the people of England, but also for trying to mediate Richard's reputation even after his death. Even though she knows her actions will "close a great many houses against [her] and deprive [her] of friends of whom I value" (qtd. in Lovell *Rage* 760), Isabel destroyed the manuscript anyway, yet another testament to her belief that saving their reputations was tantamount. Writing that she had been given options to dispose of the manuscript, including burying it and having a man publish it for her, Isabel writes:

I sat down before the fire at dark...my heart said 'You can have 6000 guineas; your husband worked for you, kept you in a happy home, with honor and respect for thirty years. How are you going to reward him? That your wretched body may be fed and clothed and warmed for a few miserable months or years'...it would be just parallel with the original 30 pieces of silver. I fetched the MS, two large volumes...still my thoughts were 'was it a sacrifice?' Will he rise up in his grave and curse me or bless me? The thought will haunt me to death...And then I said, not for 6000 gns [nor] 6,000,000 gns will I risk it. Sorrowfully...in fear and trembling, I burnt sheet after sheet until the whole of the volumes were consumed. (qtd. in Lovell *Rage* 761)



It is unclear whether Richard rose up from his grave to curse or bless Isabel, but this last act of textual editing and mediation is more complex than even her interventions with the polygamy preface and the 'Household' edition of the *Nights*. Burton may have felt that she became Judas by selling the text, but the readers of the *Morning Post* and the other papers the letter came to be printed in felt that she had betrayed both Richard Burton and them when she burnt the text. Kennedy and Cesari write that when Burton destroyed the manuscript "she did so for strategic, not moral, reasons" (242), but I contend that she destroyed the manuscript to protect herself as well: with the manuscript in an unfinished state, she would be held responsible if the text made it to publication. Either the public would know that she had finished it herself, and that she had access to all the knowledge it contained, no matter how improper, or they would know that she had given it to someone else to publish, and it would still, ultimately, be her "fault" if it saw the light of day.

Burton believed that the publication of *The Scented Garden* would damage Richard's reputation irreparably, and though she couches her destruction of it in terms of trying to save his reputation, she was also trying to guard her own. Despite the many ways she had transgressed ideals of Victorian femininity, Isabel could always hide behind the excuse that wives should obey their husbands when she helped usher his texts through publication, but with Richard dead, her own transgressions would become a target. By burning the only manuscript copy of *The Scented Garden*, Isabel not only managed an important component of Richard's textual reputation with the people of England, but she also managed her own: even though, like Stanhope and Digby, she'd lived her life on the road, she knew what English morality was, and she kept to it.

## **Mediating the Man:**

There has been much critical discussion – including lengthy discussions of Richard’s texts in newspapers and pamphlets of the Victorian period – around Richard’s work and how it represents a life he may or may not have led, but there is no real discussion from a critical perspective about the ways in which Isabel sought to try to make Richard Burton “safe” for the social spheres of Victorian England. It is evident that there was talk about Burton’s reputation long before he met Isabel. Anjali Arondekear writes: “so scandalous were the contents of [Burton’s report on the brothels of India] that its exposure resulted in Burton’s ‘summary dismissal from the service’. Burton provided no further details, either on the report’s contents or on its current location” (23). Aronekear goes on to state: “his career in India began (and failed) with the composition of an alleged report on male sexuality” (23). By marrying Richard, Isabel normalized Richard’s sexual activity: he had married into an “ancient and honoured family” which did much to allay fears about his questionable exploits and their power to destroy Isabel’s moral purity (Wilkins 176).

Professionally, Isabel filled in whenever she could, which allowed Richard the freedom to travel as he wished. Much of Isabel’s adult life was taken up doing Richard’s more menial work: the phrase most oft-repeated in their correspondence is ‘pay, pack, and follow,’ a command Isabel took to heart every time Richard got a new appointment, or felt like he wanted to move. Lovell writes that “he instructed her to pursue his claim for pension rights from the Indian Office and she lost no time in doing so” (391). When Richard travelled to Africa with John Hanning Speke and the two returned fighting about who had actually discovered the source of the Nile (in the end, it turned out Speke had been correct), Isabel tried to intervene between the two men to quiet the rumors that Speke had been spreading about Richard. Lovell tells us that because Isabel “could see no end to the bitter

and damaging feud between Speke and her husband – she tried to effect a *rapprochement*. Through a mutual connection...Isabel met Speke to discuss ending the quarrel” (*Rage* 445). For a time, according to Lovell, “she had hopes of success, but Speke was too vulnerable to the influences of those who had no love for Richard” (*Rage* 144). Their feud ended abruptly when Speke accidentally (or perhaps not) shot himself the day before he was to meet Richard for a public debate.

As Isabel put it, according to Wilkins, “since Richard would not fight his own battles, I fought them for him” (*Romance* 512). He continues, “she never ceased fighting till she had cleared away as much as possible of the cloud that shadowed her husband’s official career” (512). Indeed, when the Royal Geographical Society was meeting to discuss the source of the Nile, they failed to give Richard credit for his part in the operation. Isabel, enraged by their neglect, wrote to both *The Times* and *The Telegraph* complaining that “judge my mortification...on Monday night to hear all the papers read and discussed almost without reference to Captain Burton” (Lovell *Rage* 502). Isabel was apparently promised that the ensuing publication would refer to Richard, and when it did not, she took to the press to correct the mistake and to remind audiences that Richard “was the first to conceive the idea twenty years ago, the first to enter and penetrate that country” (*Rage* 502).

Her own works, including the *Inner Life of Syria*, were more a platform for her feelings about Richard than they were travel books or academic research texts. According to Lovell, Lady Anne Blunt thought that Isabel’s work about Syria was interesting, but also thought that her writing was ““all colored by the constant fulsome praise of Captain Burton, his wisdom and courage, which must have done his prospects harm rather than good”” (Lovell *Rage* 614). This charge that Isabel had harmed Richard’s reputation was leveled at her several times, but in reality these charges were more about her than they were about him. A

review of Richard's *Highlands of Brazil* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* referred to her as a "weak woman," and the *Daily News* suggested that she "might have spared herself the trouble of writing any preface at all, and have let her gallant and adventurous husband tell his own tale" (qtd. in *Rage* 495) but these critiques clearly demonstrate the extent to which Isabel went to try to get the public to see Richard the way she did. It seems possible that Lady Anne Blunt felt that, while *Life in Syria* was an enjoyable and exotic read, Isabel's entrance into the public world of male politics, adventure, and exploration was simply improper for an aristocratic lady.

No greater sacrifice came from Isabel than when she learned she had a slow-growing ovarian tumor. Lovell tells us that "on learning that the tumor was slow-growing, Isabel made a decision not to have the operation...the convalescence of such a major surgery might take up to a year, during which she 'would not be able to look after Richard'" (Lovell *Rage* 667). She was also, according to Lovell, worried that she would worry Richard and distract him from his work, so she ordered her doctors to keep her condition a secret (667).

When it comes to Richard's interactions with the English society he found so frustrating, Isabel was simply invaluable. When her mother objected to the match before the couple were married, Isabel wrote to Lady Arundell that Richard "was not at all the man...that people take him to be, or that he sometimes, for fun, pretends to be...any evil opinions you may have heard...arise from his recklessly setting at defiance conventional people talking nonsense" (Lovell *Rage* 330). Isabel, in this short letter, stumbles upon what much of her life would be like during her marriage to Richard. She could easily ignore the rumors about his sexuality considering that he had married her willingly and they had been together for decades, but Richard himself made it increasingly difficult to try to distance him from the man "he sometimes, for fun, pretends to be" (330). His "reckless" defiance of

conventional social mores were at least as bad as, or even more of a problem, than his written works turned out to be. There was undoubtedly tension in their marriage around Richard's public life and his insistence in maintaining his image as a shadowy, ribald figure,<sup>27</sup> and for a woman with Victorian ideals about propriety and civility, even just "managing" Richard in a crowded room became a challenge for Isabel. Were she to cease, however, Richard, who cared nothing about his reputation and seemed gleefully proud to have it questioned, was apt to let people believe whatever they wanted to believe, regardless of how much harm it caused him. Kennedy writes that Burton felt a "profound unease in England" along with a "discomfort with its customs...distrust of its institutions...distain for its values" (24). He felt that "the place suffocated him" but he also could not escape the facts: that England "was the ultimate arbiter of his fate, the authority that set the criteria for his ambitions, and the audience that determined how his accomplishments would be received" (24). When W.H. Wilkins writes that Richard had "done many clever and marvelous things during his life, but the best day's work he ever did for himself was when he married Isabel Arundell," he guides his reader to consider exactly how important Isabel was in Richard's life (176). For Wilkins, it gave "lie to the rumors against him which were floating about," but Isabel's work for Richard was much more important than serving as confirmation that he had normative heterosexual desire.<sup>28</sup>

At another speaking engagement that Richard participated in (his debate with Speke was cancelled upon news of the latter's death), Isabel – seizing an opportunity following Richard's lectures where there was a brief pause in questions – rose to discuss his so-called

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<sup>27</sup> Dane Kennedy points out: "almost every detail of the dissolute behavior cited by his [Richard's] biographers – the drugs, the sex, and so forth – derives from his own published accounts of his activities while in India" (30).

<sup>28</sup> In fact, these rumors would never quite go away completely. The couple were childless (Lovell surmises that Isabel was rendered infertile when Richard gave her the syphilis he had contracted in India) and many rumors circulated that they lived in a sexless marriage.

love of mystical experiences. “Speaking off the cuff from notes she made during Richard’s ovation,” Burton reminded Richard’s audience that “her husband’s beliefs in ‘the force,’ did not make him a spiritualist” (Lovell *Rage* 644). Reminding the audience that: “spiritualism as practiced in England was quite different...to that practiced in the East” and that though it was a relatively new phenomenon in England, an interest in mystical experiences “is as old as the time in Eastern countries,” (644) and accused them of “receiving [his fondness for mysticism] wrongly” (644). Isabel’s defense of Richard here is, in some ways, a way of aligning him with ideas of masculinity that were emerging in the late Victorian period. John Tosh has argued that a new era of ‘manliness’ was emerging, one in which “the desired outcome was the ‘independent man’ – one who was beholden to no one, who kept his own counsel, and who ruled his own household” (460). Seizing on Richard’s gruffness and penchant for saying whatever he felt like, Isabel was able to suggest that he epitomized the manliness of the age, a man who “paid more attention to the promptings of his inner self than to the dictates of social expectation” (460). By doing this, Burton tried to distance her husband once more from the racial and sexual differences he embodied. Rather than representing the effeminacy of the East and the growing crusade against questionable male sexuality and effeminacy, Richard embodied the ultimate signs of masculinity, someone with the “direct, honest, and succinct speech” of man who cared little for “social expectations” (460).

If Richard did not exactly understand how important Isabel was and how hard she worked for him, others did. When Richard was made a knight in 1888, Isabel suspected that the public would view it as an effect of her self interest, but Lovell reports that “the drafts for the documents used in the attempt to obtain a knighthood...were in Richard’s handwriting, not [Isabel’s]” (*Rage* 609). Nevertheless, officials in the Indian Army and the

Foreign office continually frowned upon the prospect of Richard being given a knighthood, and it took until Lord Salisbury resigned after losing the election for Richard to be honored in a series of resignation appointments. Lovell gives us some important information here that signals that even the Queen knew how hard Isabel had worked; Salisbury had written privately to Isabel to tell her that: “the Queen had specifically stated her pleasure in being able to make an award that they could both ‘share’ to mark the anniversary of their Silver Wedding” (693). That even Victoria felt that the country somehow owed Isabel a debt of gratitude was a staggering compliment, and one that signals the serious influence that Isabel had on Richard and the way that the English world viewed him.

### **Isabel Burton and the Woman Traveler**

Isabel’s life – expressed in travel writings and in her autobiography – serves as a model for female behavior in an age of increasing travel on the part of women. Isabel actively engages with the staunchest of Victorian rhetoric when she posits that, in all she did, transgressive or not, she followed Richard’s wishes. By aligning Richard with appropriate English masculinity (or, at the very least, by attempting to do so), Isabel renders herself a proper Victorian wife by suggesting that even if she publicly petitioned for Richard, or filed his government papers, or dressed up as his son to travel more freely, she did it because her husband told her to and because it was her role as a ‘wife’ to follow his instructions. By doing so, she makes herself into a model of female behavior that easily irons out the transgressions she committed during their travels

In full knowledge that she and Richard would lead an unconventional life, Isabel prepared for every eventuality, learning how to do domestic chores, but also how to care for horses and prepare meals without the luxuries she would normally be provided. By adhering to what McClintock suggests are the rules of the “monogamous, patriarchal family, headed

by a single white father” (27) Burton performs two actions simultaneously. As I have already discussed, she characterizes her *own* family as following this pattern, thus removing from both she and Richard the suspicion of malfeasance, especially polygamy. Secondly, she offers a model for future female travelers who seek to follow in her footsteps. By marrying a man – the only man – who can offer her the life she wanted, and by maintaining that she lived strictly under his guidance, she could not possibly be guilty of charges of transculturation or of transgressing the norms of English society.

In *The Inner Life of Syria*, she tells her reader that “this book contains little History, Geography, or Politics; no Science, Ethnography, Botany, Geology, Zoology, Mineralogy, or Antiquities” (vii). Instead, Burton writes, “this book contains things women will like to know” (vii). Her purpose is plainly stated:

I wish to convey an idea of the life, which an Englishwoman may make for herself in the East. In so doing, I have found it difficult to avoid being too personal, or egotistical, or too frank, but I do not know how to tell my story in any other way, and I hope that in exchange for my experience my readers will be indulgent. (vii)

Burton’s word usage here is key: she does not intend her work to merely give an idea of where she has been and what she and Richard have been doing, nor is it a defense of Richard’s behavior. Her intention, she says, is to “convey an idea of the life which an Englishwoman may make for herself in the East” (vii). That Burton feels she needs to give this advice indicates her awareness of the growing number of women who would travel by the end of the nineteenth century, and offers instructions in living properly in the East. Explicit in this advice is that no English woman should expect to follow in the footsteps of Stanhope and Digby, but Burton does make it clear that she believes a civilized life in the



East is within the realm of possibility for the average Victorian woman. Burton also uses this text to demonstrate her own conventionality and allegiance to customs used by other women, as if she is trying to suggest that she is just one in a long line of travelers that will eventually grow much longer. Following in the footsteps of female authors before her, she places the responsibility for authorship in the day to day activities of a woman, by suggesting that nothing she has written has arisen out of any other place than her own private musings. She writes: “I have often been accused of writing as if it were intended as an address for the Royal Geographical Society, that is, in a quasi-professional way” (vii). Her reason for this, she writes, is that she “always wrote with and for my husband, and under his direction” (vii). Her first solo act of writing, *Syria* is intended to be a “humble instrument” to launch various philanthropic ventures.

Much of *Syria* contains a direct intervention into the issues she faces during her journey. She analyzes the role of the wife, emphasizing the attributes that make a woman so indispensable to her husband that “she has no need of the ‘evil eye,’ nor love potions...her husband could not do without her; he loves her and knows her as himself. He will listen to no voice but hers, and he would find a second wife very much in the way” (158). Burton carefully leads her audience into recognizing that it is possible not only to live in the East, but to do so while remaining a ‘good’ English wife and by following the letter, if not the spirit, of the laws of Victorian propriety.

Burton’s goal to help Englishwomen learn how to live in the East does not turn away from sensitive subjects like interracial marriage. She relates that she and Richard received a visit from the Emir Mulhim Rustam and in choosing his visit as a subject of narration, Burton makes clear that part of this text is intended to be a guide for British women who want to travel to the East. She writes:

Young ladies of England! This is the only real 'Prince of the Lebanon' left, so remember his name; for unless he goes over to England to look for a wife you will not be a Princess of the Lebanon. I know so many Syrian 'Princes of the Lebanon' who have deluded my fair compatriots into the romantic idea of marrying them. (350-1)

Cautioning her audience about the romance of marrying an Eastern man and invoking the specter of Digby, Burton essentially negates the possibility of miscegenation completely by telling her audience that, because there is only one 'Prince of Lebanon' left, and as he has no plans to travel to England, it is unlikely that they would enter into a solid interracial match (this, of course, further negates the possibilities of her own interracial marriage). She writes that though they "may still find scions of old houses whose glory is departed...you will live in a very poor and very matter of fact way, so you may as well do it in England, where you can be comfortable" (351). Burton, here, draws attention to what has been hidden in discourses of the East, though easily traceable in the fictions of Aubin and Haywood, and in Montagu's letters. She knows, she says, that there is much romance in the possibility of a relationship with an exotic Turkish man, and that this romance can draw a woman into fantasies of transgression. But, she suggests, there is little to recommend these relationships beyond that romance and argues that if a woman is going to enter into an eventually unwanted marriage, she might as well do so at home, where she can be comfortable. If women ignore her advice, she writes:

you must lose your English independence, and sink to the level of the Eastern rule for woman. You have no person educated according to your ideas to exchange a thought with, even after you know the language; and you will sorely want, after a year, either to return home or to throw yourself into the sea. If you

are unhappy enough to have children, you would not cast off the father, and you would weep yourself into a destiny very like being buried alive, and that, too, with a lord and master who has not sufficient education to be companionable.

(351)

Interracial marriage, Burton posits, rather than simply being a flight of fancy (like the one into which Digby entered), can actually be fatal to any woman who takes that plunge. If she survives, Burton tells us, it is only to live miserably until ultimately suffering a lonely death. It is clear, then, that Burton's text attempts quite readily to suggest that a young lady of England is risking too much if she seeks to become the wife of a 'Prince of Lebanon.'

Following her advice to the "young ladies of England," Burton sets her sights on "English wives who may travel to the East" (351). She advises that "before the Eastern world, not only observe the same reserve towards your husband as you would to a stranger, but also treat him as a Master" (351). By treating Richard as her master, Burton legitimizes her own potential transgressions: associating with Arabs, dressing in male Arabic dress, and visiting with her social inferiors are all done because Richard, her husband, wanted her to do them, and it is her duty as a Victorian woman to do as her husband requests. In this case, Burton uses patriarchal ideology in her favor, casting her own transgressions as the will of her supposedly more rational husband. Burton urges her audience to act according to Middle Eastern customs, saying that: "you must obey his slightest look, and show in every way that he is your superior" (these foreign customs, she suggests, are a lot closer to English customs than some might think) (351-2). In this case, European convention actually serves to distance Isabel from being found guilty for the same crimes as Montagu, Stanhope and Digby. These women, she argued, acted according to their own wills, and a 'good' female traveler simply does what is required of her.

Her final act of guidance toward English women serves to begin the mission she would continue with her Household version of the *Nights*. Here, Burton cautions the married woman (and perhaps the single woman as well) from bringing the East into England (this, of course, sets her up as contrary to Montagu, who supported the importation of Eastern medicine into the English body). Burton cautions her audience against finding a husband in the East with the idea of “transplant[ing] it to your English home” (352). She suggests that these men will rapidly turn the woman into a slave, writing “worshipping you all the while, he will ill-treat you, and be rude to you, and seek a quarrel with you every day” (352). In a few short pages in the midst of her travel narrative, Burton has performed a series of rhetorical tasks that demonstrates her awareness that travel to the East was becoming more frequent and that women were apt – like Digby, Stanhope and Montagu – to be seduced by some aspect of Eastern life.

By cautioning her readers against certain behaviors that lead those at home to believe that an English woman has been transculturated, Burton creates a way not only to defend herself from accusations of impropriety while travelling, but also to allow for female adventure within the confines of British normativity and tightening rules of propriety in England when it came to dealing with people of other races. Her text, then, offers a firmly Victorian, patriarchal model for transgression: by following Richard’s lead and staying away from ‘polluting’ activities like polygamy, interracial sex, or the importation of Eastern influences into England, Isabel Burton creates a pathway for future female travelers who, under the same restrictions and suspicions she must have been continually under, can still experience a life full of meaning, excitement and adventure.

## Conclusion

### *In which the author reflects on her dismay*

When I began this project, I expected, in the end, to find what I thought I knew to be true: that despite the years of rhetoric about the hazards and dangers of female travel and suspicion about the sexual morality of the travelling woman, female travel – though still complicated by the responsibilities and restrictions placed on women, the relative confinement of women to the home in large parts of the developing world, and international conflicts that keep some women (even those in the military) away from dangerous places – had become far less problematic and, indeed, far more accepted by the majority of the Western world. During the course of this study, however, I found myself stumbling increasingly on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works that used discourse I hear all around me in debates about female travel, vaccinations and female sexual restraint, in academic work about so-called ‘female sex tourism’ (or perhaps even worse, ‘romance tourism’), and in ideas of modern ethnosexual relationships and transculturation. My aim in this conclusion is to draw from some of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources that I have encountered during the research and writing of this study in order to highlight the ways in which, despite the efforts of Aubin, Haywood, Montagu, Burton, and others to try to eliminate the sex of a traveler as a factor from the forefront of feminine experience both at home and overseas, discourse about female sexuality is still very much predicated on paternal concerns for purity and morality, and female travel is still linked to sexual adventure.

In chapter one, I discussed issues of female captivity and captivity narratives, and analyzed the ways in which early texts by Aubin and Haywood work to try to alter perceptions of sexual danger faced by women overseas, and the ways in which masculine violence against

women is as much – or in these works – more a product of ‘home’ than it is of ‘away.’ I contrasted the ways in which Aubin’s and Haywood’s heroines experience sexual violence at the hands of the so-called ‘civilized’ European male to the supposedly ‘barbarous’ Ottoman sultan who seems to offer at least a fantasy of captivity as the opening up a realm of experience not granted to women by European society. In these texts, captivity and sexual violence are on display, and readers are clearly forced to engage with a world where European men are allowed – even encouraged – to take sexual liberties with undefended women.

Where Jessica Taylor (2007), Anne Kaler (1999) and Kate McCafferty (1994) argue that modern fictional romance texts like those published by Zebra Books or Harlequin offer up similar notions of the world of captivity as a place of sexual fantasy, love, and prosperity and often eroticize the sexual experience as one of passion between two willing (and thus consenting) adults, modern non-fictional captivity narratives are troubled by the discourse of sexual assault, and seem driven by the desire to eliminate the threat of sexual assault from the Western world. Take, for instance, the story of American soldier PFC Jessica Lynch, kidnapped after an ambush and firefight in Iraq, and held in an Iraqi hospital for nine days until she was rescued in a heavily propagandized mission. According to ABC News, “a medical report indicates the private was sexually assaulted at the hospital, but Lynch says she has no recollection of the attack. ‘Even just thinking about that, that’s too painful’, she said” (1). That the U.S. government, in the days before and after Lynch’s rescue, chose to publicize these medical reports, ones that under normal circumstances would be held confidential, helped to legitimize what amounted to a violent armed attack on a hospital full of sleeping patients and unarmed medical staff. By highlighting that their rescue was an attempt to avenge violated

female honor, the U.S. military raised the specter of the men of the *Grosvenor*, anxiously looking to find Lydia Logie before she succumbed to rape at the hands of ‘barbarians.’

Further complicating the issue was the insistence on the part of the U.S. military that Lynch had – to paraphrase – not gone down willingly, but had been “wounded by Iraqi gunfire and kept firing until her ammunition ran out, shooting several Iraqis” (1), Lynch herself, however (both in an interview with ABC News quoted here, and in testimony to a Congressional hearing), swears that she “did not shoot, not a round, nothing...we were told to lock and load, that’s when my weapon jammed...I did not shoot a single round...I went down praying to my knees” (1). That the U.S. military used rhetoric of the captive woman trying to fight her way out is eerily similar to discourse that emerged in 1857 during the siege of Lucknow. The extreme violence with which the British Army in Bengal took revenge on sepoys was based on their need to avenge the deaths of women and children. Beyond this violent revenge, one wonders if this cover-up was not an implicit admission by the United States government that it believed that Lynch failed to adequately protect herself from sexual assault. This, of course, raises the specter of Durston’s “medical observer,” who contended that “rape, by which is meant an compleat, full, and entire coition...seems to be impossible...for a woman always possesses sufficient power, by drawing back her limbs, and by the force of her hands, to prevent the insertion of the penis” (‘Rape in the Eighteenth Century, Part I’ 25).<sup>29</sup>

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reporter Mellissa Fung’s captivity experience – and her later retelling of it in a CBC interview, and then in her *Under an Afghan Sky* – is

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<sup>29</sup> Any follower of American politics in the lead-up to the 2012 American presidential race will find this particular comment familiar: it is evocative of Representative Todd Akin’s (Rep. Missouri) very recent comments that it is needless to legalize abortion in cases of rape, because, during a “legitimate rape,” the body has “ways to try to shut that whole thing [conception] down.”

among the most terrifying I have ever read, but it is also curious on the subject of sexual violence. A few days after Fung was released from captivity, she spoke to Anna Maria Tremonti, host of CBC's morning show, *The Current*. Even a journalist of Tremonti's skill, experience, and sensitivity cannot help but ask Fung about her 'safety' during her ordeal:

AMT: The first thing we all think about too is that you've been taken by these guys, you're a woman, you *are* in the middle of nowhere. What about your safety? Did they hurt you? Did they...[trails off]?

MF: They were really concerned about my stab wounds...generally they didn't hit me, they didn't beat me, they always brought juice and cookies into the hole and wanted to make sure that I was eating.

Tremonti's inability to ask the question that "we" all want to know the answer to, suggests that, though we have some fundamental belief that sexual violence should be a matter of public record, when it happens, we refuse to speak about it. Even in the most public of forums, we cannot bring ourselves to say the words necessary to fulfill our own desires for knowledge we have no right to possess.

Fung's narrative of her experience *Under an Afghan Sky* tells of the sexual violence committed against her in a way with which readers Richardson's *Clarissa* would be familiar. Just at the moment of rape, Fung inserts a very telling line break which cuts the narrative off until her captor leaves her. The textual disruption – similar to the one Richardson was forced to rely on some 250 years ago – seems to offer little hope that sexual violence will ever become a source of public discussion or confrontation. In fact, though we praise modernity, Aubin and Haywood seem to have more ability to speak of sexual assault than the twenty-first century



woman. Fung's belief – revealed in a later CBC interview – that she needed to speak about her rape because thousands of women are raped in Afghanistan every day without the ability to speak about it, is curious in the sense that it implies that being unable to speak about sexual violence is something that happens to “other” women, in “other” places, regardless of current statistics that suggest that a staggering number of sexual assaults go unreported in North America.

It is not just in the realm of sexual violence that female sexual purity seems to continue to be an object of public speculation. In the same way that, in 1722, Edward Massey ranted that inoculation against smallpox would create a situation wherein people (ie: women) would “gladly give into the extravagance of these licentious cities [where smallpox was], to the apparent hazard of reputation and fortune” (7), church and religious leaders condemn the mandatory vaccination of young girls against HPV, the virus that is known to cause cervical cancer. Cheryl Vamos, Robert McDermott and Ellen Daley (2008) report that “Reverend Thomas J. Euteneuer, President of Human Life International” railed against “vaccinated sex” because he felt it would cause “human intimacy” to turn into “a mechanistic pastime like a video game with delete protection” (304). Euteneuer felt that Planned Parenthood, a supporter of the wide-ranging administration of the HPV vaccine, was granting women “their license for sex” (304). Leslie Unruth, Director of the National Abstinence Clearinghouse, declared that she “personally object[s] to vaccinating children against a disease that is 100% preventable with proper sexual behavior” (305). That this vaccination is largely (and systematically, only) provided to women suggests that what Ms. Unruth fears is not improper sexual behavior on the part of *children*, but rather improper sexual behavior on the part of *women*. Euteneuer stated as

much, calling the HPV vaccination one that “females” could get in order to “have their license for sex validated at Planned Parenthood before passing ‘go’” (304). Mixed metaphors aside, it becomes clear that the same rhetoric that was used to try to discourage people from supporting smallpox vaccinations lest they support growing licentiousness among the English, and greater freedom for women to have sex with ‘diseased’ foreign men, is still in play as a means of controlling the sexual behavior of women in the twenty-first century.

That the East maintains a kind of mystique for female travelers seems to be true in light of recent research by Jessica Jacobs (2009), whose study surveys female travelers who are engaged in ethnosexual relationships with Egyptian men. Jacobs writes that it is “a common activity for western women to travel in search of sexual encounters with ‘local’ men” and she suggests that these relationships are “bound up in temporal/spatial geographical imaginations of place that involve an ‘emotional geography’ so that the sex/love object is not just the man but also a landscape considered to exist out of time and place” (44). So-called ‘romance tourists’ (a title that aligns women with the fictional ‘romance heroines’ of modern Harlequin-type works), serves for some women as a “solution to...disillusionment with Europe” (48). Though this fantasy life seems to be an option for some women, these relationships are ones that travel advice pamphlets and other media continually caution women against.<sup>30</sup>

Concerned with the sexual safety of Canadian women abroad, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade recently issued a pamphlet entitled “Her Own Way: A Woman’s Safe Travel Guide.” Though this title might suggest a certain amount of freedom and

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<sup>30</sup> I only half in jest direct the reader to consider the aftermath of Lady Mary Crawley’s affair with Mr. Pamuk, son of the Turkish Ambassador to England on Julian Fellowes’ *Downton Abbey*, or the persistent, scurrilous rumors that the car crash that killed Princess Diana was a plot by Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth II to prevent the mother of the future king from marrying a Muslim.

agency, it quickly becomes clear that these are rules for traveling the ‘Canadian Government Way.’ Our government opens this pamphlet by stating that “women travel for countless reasons, whether to discover new frontiers, pursue business opportunities, or simply to rest and relax – not unlike men” (1). Unlike men, however, women are advised that, “activities such as wearing a bikini or having premarital sex” may not be legal in foreign countries. If these activities – especially the premarital sex – *are* legal, women are seemingly cautioned that all men, in all circumstances, at all times, will attempt to have it with them. Women are urged to “be careful who you trust...Beware of the threat of getting trapped in sex or labor trafficking” and to “ask a police officer, shopkeeper, or another woman” for directions if they find themselves lost (6). This pamphlet urges women to “know the risks of ending up with strange men” and to “think twice before leaving a club or party with someone you’ve just met or accepting an invitation to go out with a man alone” (7). This pamphlet clearly seems designed for women who, once they “think twice” about going on a date with a man they just met, will realize that they are in a situation where their “virtue” is threatened, and return to their hotel rooms alone. In case any unmarried Canadian women find themselves in a situation where they might be tempted to engage in premarital sex with a strange man, they are cautioned to “wear a (fake) wedding ring. Also carry a photo of your husband (or an imaginary one) which you can show to persistent suitors” (16). There are incredibly troubling aspects to this discourse that cannot be mistaken: first, the idea that women are never safe outside of Canada not only echoes past warnings to our female travelers, but suggests, like Fung’s confession that she told the story of her rape for the women of Afghanistan, that sexual assault is something that happens ‘over there’ or, to be more Augustan about it, at the hands of ‘barbarians.’ Secondly, the contention

that the only safe woman is a married woman negates the importance of campaigns to end violence against women, who are often targets *because* they are married. Thirdly, this text also seeks to negate female sexual desire in its entirety: suppose the single woman travelling alone wants, as Jacobs suggests is quite prevalent, to engage in an affair abroad? This pamphlet constructs this desire as not only abnormal, but also “fraught with disappointment” and likely to leave the woman with the “hope of a union that may never happen” or one that the traveler “may later regret” (22).<sup>31</sup>

In the course of this project I have striven to suggest that Haywood and Aubin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Isabel Burton, and authors who engaged with issues surrounding the female castaway, were concerned with altering the perception of women traveling and living overseas. By essentially removing the threat of sexual violence against women traveling outside of England, or by equipping women to handle these threats easily and negotiate their own paths through the world of foreign travel and the fantasies it inspires, travel abroad becomes not only safe for women but ultimately beneficial for spreading ideas of national identity, civility, and domesticity. The female traveler becomes, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, uniquely able to navigate the complexities of travel in ways that do not compromise her personal or national integrity. These works also call our accepted ideas of women’s lives and abilities into question, especially considering the ways that violence against women is a driving force in eighteenth-century fiction, rather than something that results from a chanced shipwreck or captivity scene. The women studied in this dissertation also manage to neutralize the threat travel poses to their compatriots in the metropole by establishing themselves as

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<sup>31</sup> Equally problematic here is the impression given to women that all men, everywhere, are potential rapists, a notion that must be troubling to much of the male population.

perfectly able to negotiate the complexities of travel without fear for their safety or the safety of others. It seems a pity that these ideas have been drowned out by the overwhelming notion that female sexual agency is under surveillance, but violent sexual assault remains hidden in the shadows and the foreign.

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